

RCN BEACH COMMANDO

'W'



E.G. FINLEY

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**Cover picture shows
Able Seaman Armand Therien
in full battle attire**

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RCN BEACH COMMANDO "W"

E.G. Finley

RCN Beach Commando “W”

Part I **A chronicle based on official Canadian military archival records of its establishment, training, and operations during World War II.**

Part II **Off-the-record anecdotal “portholes”.**

O CANADA -- WE STOOD ON GUARD FOR THEE

To all who contributed to the well-being of our unique Canadian naval unit throughout its year-long existence during the Second World War, PART I of the following chronicle is dedicated.

To those who assisted in creating any of the eleven PORTHOLES or the several appendices, the whole of PART II is dedicated.

PART II

	<u>Location</u>	<u>Subject</u>	<u>Reference</u>
17.	Precedes p.1	Graduation Day	PAC
18.	Opp. p.3	HMCS "Slow Dribble"	K. Macpherson/J. Burgess. <u>The Ships of Canada's Naval Forces, 1910-1981</u>
19.	Opp. p.4	HMT Mauretania	T. Coleman. <u>The Liners</u> . Penguin Books, 1977, p.[178]
20.	Opp. p.11	"Nelson"	PAC. PA-183042
21.	Follows p.14	Admiral Barry	L. Peillard. <u>Coulez le Tirpitz</u> . R. Laffont, 1965, between pp.180 & 181
22.	Opp. p.16	PBM O'Hagan	PAC. PA-131555
23.	Opp. p.23	Some of the Top	PAC
24.	Opp. p.24	"Churchill"	unknown
25.	Opp. p.25	Casualties	Feasby, I, opp. p.376
26.	Opp. p.27	HMT QUEEN MARY	M. Maddocks. <u>The Great Liners</u> . Virginia: Time-Life Books, 1978, p.152
27.	Follows p.28	THE Q.E.'s AFT	<u>Ibid.</u> , p.142
28.	Follows p.36	PORTHOLE #11	Front page, <u>The Ottawa Citizen</u> , Dec. 23. 1993.
29.	Opp. p.38	F/L W.H. Pentland	PAC
30.	Opp. p.40	S/L C. MacArthur	Extract from #23 above
31.	Opp. p.41	D DAY	IGN, France, 1994
32.	Opp. p.43	Badge & Flashes	PAC. X-31
		Head-Wound	Feasby, II, opp. p.240
33.	Opp. p.44	Casualties evacuated	Feasby, II, opp. p.352
34.	Opp. p.49	AIR EVACUATION	Feasby, I, opp. p.374
35.	Opp. p.63	Canadian Hospital Ship	Feasby, I, opp. p.71
36.	Opp. p.79	Surg. Capt. Johnstone	PAC

*PAC stands for Public Archives of Canada, Photographic Section

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Finally, special thanks and commendation go to Janet Westall who safely and successfully navigated the good ship RCNBC "W" often through uncharted waters and over rough seas. That the chronicle has finally reached port and the "finished with engines" signal struck on the bridge telegraph is a tribute to her skill, determination, and patience with respect to all the electronic equipment used in its production.

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Introduction

In the mainly Canadian-manned August 19, 1942, Dieppe raid during World War II, three Royal Naval Beach Parties ("C", "D", and "H") were among the other participating Allied military units.³⁰¹ Their principal task related to disembarking troops and vehicles from assault landing craft, organizing and supervising suitable "beach" areas, and loading serviceable vessels at the time of withdrawal. According to Hampshire,

Of the total of [over 200] naval Beach Party personnel involved in the Dieppe raid, one officer and two ratings were killed, 9 wounded and 51 were officially listed as missing.³⁰²

As a result, all three RN Beach Parties had to be "totally reconstituted."

Soon after Dieppe the Admiralty made several decisions which affected its Combined Operations Beach Party branch:³⁰³

1. In relation to Admiral Mountbatten (Chief of Combined Operations)'s suggestion that their name be changed to "Naval Commandos", beach party personnel were authorized to wear "RN Commandos" shoulder flashes above the Combined Operations badge on each arm.
2. By mid-October 1942 Force J had been created and commissioned as HMS Vectis, with its senior officer's headquarters located in the Royal Yacht Squadron premises at Cowes. The Force's permanent group of over a hundred assorted landing craft and ships berthed in the Solent.
3. In North Devon HMS Appledore was commissioned as a beach experimental establishment which subsequently trained frogmen, RN Commandos, and underwater clearance teams.
4. A specialist school for training beach commandos was opened at a camp-site at Ardentinny on Loch Long in Argyll and was subsequently commissioned as HMS Armadillo. Vice-Admiral T. Hallett (Director of Combined Operations training) supervised the production of documents describing requirements for each particular position.

Regarding the use of beach commandos in the eventual invasion of western Europe, Hampshire remarks:³⁰⁴

Twenty of these would be required, two each for three assault divisions, one per assault brigade, with 100% spare in reserve.

Royal Canadian Naval Beach Commando "W" came into existence in late 1943 and disbanded at the end of August 1944. Modelled upon its Royal Navy counterpart, "W" comprised eighty-four RCNVR men (12 officers and 72 ratings).

The Naval Beach Commando is a unit especially trained in the control and handling of landing craft on the beaches ... [and] is designed to handle the landing ships, craft and barges of an assault brigade group and the further ships, craft and barges landed on the same beaches. It is divided into three beach parties, each commanded by a beachmaster (BMr). The Naval Beach Commando is under the command of the principal beachmaster (PBMr).¹

Attached to each Commando is a separate Beach Signals Section which consists of thirty men (2 officers and 28 ratings). In turn, these combined units work cooperatively with an Army Beach Company (17 officers and 426 other ranks) and form a Beach Group which is responsible for landing a three-battalion assault brigade.²

Covering the twelve-month period beginning around September 1943, the following chronicle about "W" Commando is based primarily on documents selected from particular volumes of Record Group 24 in the National Archives of Canada (vide BIBLIOGRAPHY, item B.).

Section 1

Authorizing establishment

One of the earliest references to beach commandos by Canadian naval authorities appears in a Jan. 27, 1943, letter from Commander Commanding Canadian Ships and Establishments in the United Kingdom (CCCS) to Naval Service Headquarters (NSHQ) in Ottawa.³ In the letter CCCS (Cdr. F.A. Price, RCNVR at the time) mentions the expansion then occurring in the R.N.'s Combined Operations Beach Party Branch. Because almost the entire five hundred Canadian naval personnel then on loan to the R.N. were serving in landing craft, Price recommends providing an additional hundred seamen with the object of forming one all-Canadian Beach Party unit.⁴ The Chief of Naval Personnel (CNP) at NSHQ reacts to this recommendation by advising the Director of Plans (DP) on Feb. 25 that he has recently received a request from CCCS for a hundred seamen "to form a purely Canadian Assault Landing Group in the United Kingdom".⁵

Effective Jun. 15, Price's title changed to Senior Canadian Naval Officer, London (SCNO(L)).⁶ A fortnight later Lt. W.S. Brooke, RCNVR, replaced Lt. Cdr. K.S. Maclachlan, RCNVR, as Staff Officer, Combined Operations (SO(CO)) under SCNO(L).⁷ Brooke, who became an Acting/Lt. Cdr. as of Jul. 30,⁸ subsequently played a major role with respect to R.C.N. involvement in combined operations.

As part of a five-page July 15 memorandum to SCNO(L) dealing with training minor landing craft crews in the U.K., Brooke described the R.N. Beach Commando base in HMS Armadillo at Ardentinny on Loch Long in Scotland where each Commando underwent basic training.⁹ After spending July 14-18 observing Canadian army units engage in combined operations exercises around Inveraray and Troon, he flew to Canada on Aug. 16 to attend



Lt.Cdr. W. Saurin Brooke, RCNVR
Staff Officer (Combined Operations), SCNO(L),
July 1943 to October 1944

the tail-end of the Allied leaders' August 10-18 "Quadrant" Conference in Quebec City and then proceeded to the West Coast to observe Canadian combined operations activities first hand.¹⁰

In a report entitled "Canadian Naval Participation in Combined Operations" which he sent to SCNO(L) on Aug. 28, Brooke recommended the types of landing craft both for Canada's two *LSI(M)s and also for the proposed Canadian three-flotilla **LCI(L) squadron.¹² He made no mention, however, of any Beach Commando.

On Aug. 31, the Cabinet War Committee held a special afternoon meeting, chaired by Mackenzie King, the Canadian Prime Minister, at the Citadel in Quebec City.¹³ Besides regular members, others present included U.K.'s Prime Minister (who was also Minister of Defence), Britain's First Sea Lord, as well as Canada's three Chiefs of Staff. The meeting considered operational decisions taken by President Roosevelt, Prime Minister Churchill and the Combined Chiefs of Staff at the recently concluded "Quadrant" Conference.¹⁴ Speaking on behalf of Mr. Churchill, the First Sea Lord suggested five specific ways that Canada might assist the Royal Navy meet its current manpower shortages:¹⁵

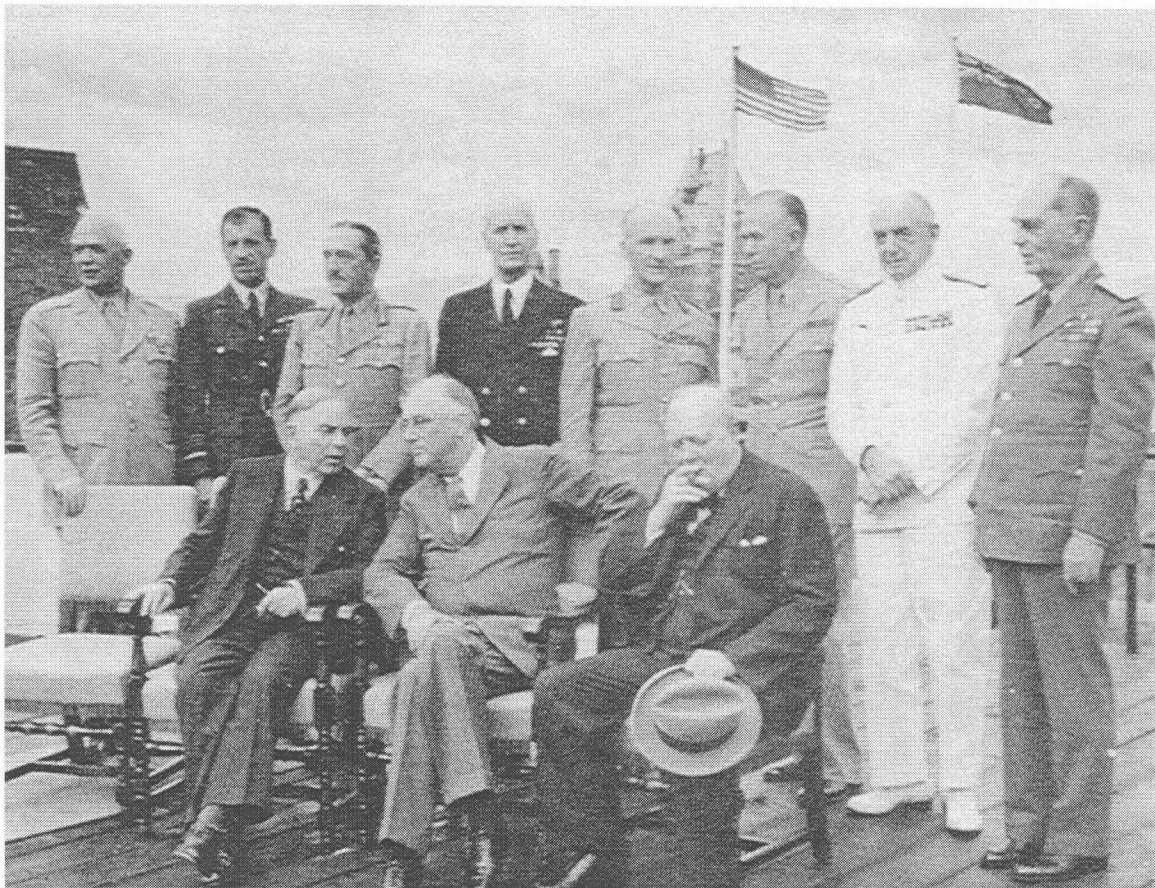
- (1) one or two cruisers to be taken over by the Royal Canadian Navy, at a later date, progressive training of Canadian personnel to be arranged meantime;
- (2) two Fleet destroyers to be manned by the R.C.N. in December of this year, or soon after, conditions of transfer to be for subsequent discussion;

* LSI(M) = Landing Ship Infantry (Medium)

** LCI(L)= Landing Craft Infantry (Large). Normally a flotilla contained twelve landing craft and three flotillas formed a squadron.¹¹



"Quadrant" Conference, Quebec City, August 1943.
Seated, left to right: Mackenzie King, Roosevelt, Churchill.



- (3) the R.C.N. to form a Canadian unit of three flotillas of landing craft complete with squadron and flotilla staffs (approximately 350 men), training, in Britain, to be completed by the spring of 1944;
- (4) the R.C.N. to form one Beach Commando and one Beach Signal Unit (approximately 1,000 [sic] men), training, in Britain, to be completed by the spring of 1944; and
- (5) the R.C.N. to provide 120 "C.W." (Commission Warrant) candidates for training in Britain and loan to the Royal Navy.

After mentioning that these proposals had already received preliminary study by Canada's Naval staff, the Minister of National Defence for Naval Services pointed out that due to a slowdown in deliveries of escort vessels from Canadian shipyards and by making certain arrangements, "it would be possible to meet the British requests within the limit of the present Naval programme."¹⁶ Following brief statements by the Chief of the Naval Staff (CNS), the Minister of Finance, Mr. Churchill, and finally Canada's Prime Minister, the War Committee "agreed that the proposals submitted be referred to the Chief of the Naval Staff for detailed examination with the First Sea Lord, and subsequent report by the Minister of National Defence for Naval Services for consideration by the War Committee."¹⁷

By approving these proposals at its next meeting on Sept. 8, Canada's Cabinet War Committee thereby officially authorized the establishment of a Royal Canadian Naval Beach Commando.¹⁸ The following constitutes a summary of Paragraphs #13 to #20 of the minutes of proceedings which appear under the heading "Navy: British proposals for further assistance: aircraft carriers"

- 13. The essence of a Naval Staff report on the various British proposals appears in Cabinet War Committee Document #604¹⁹ which was circulated on Sept. 7 with the agenda for next day's meeting.

14. The Prime Minister points out that the War Committee has been placed in a difficult position at the August 31 meeting because the British proposals "had been put to the government without notice of any kind".
15. The Chief of the Naval Staff indicates that while "the First Sea Lord had, at an early stage in the Quebec Conference, discussed informally with members of the Canadian Naval staff various proposals for Canadian assistance to the Royal Navy", he hadn't expected any specific proposals to be brought forward on August 31.
16. Commenting on the Naval Staff report, the Minister of National Defence for Naval Services felt that the 3,200 personnel required to meet the proposed commitments "could be provided within the limits of the approved Naval programme....." He estimated that an additional 4,350 men would be needed to man and provide shore facilities for two aircraft carriers.
17. & 18. Naval Staff, according to its Chief, recommends accepting the Admiralty's proposals and making a start on acquiring two aircraft carriers.
19. Noting that "Canada has now reached the limits of her (human and material) resources in the war effort", the Prime Minister declares that "no new commitments could be accepted."
20. "The War Committee, after further discussion, agreed:
 - a) that acceptance of the U.K. proposals be approved in principle, on condition that their implementation, together with the proposals regarding aircraft carriers, would involve no drain on Canadian manpower additional to that involved in the present Naval programme; and
 - b) that the proposals regarding aircraft carriers be referred to the Ministers of National Defence for Naval Services and for Air for examination and joint report to the War Committee."

Regarding these August and September events which included a visit of Captain R.H.V. Buxton, RN (Chief of Combined Operations Bases, Western Approaches) to NSHQ just prior to the "Quadrant" Conference, the Canadian naval historian G.N. Tucker would remark some nine years afterwards:

The Canadian Naval Staff was thus able to examine its own resources and meet many of the proposals made by the British authorities at the First Quebec Conference. At this conference the Canadian Chief of the Naval Staff and the Directors of Plans and Naval Personnel met their "opposite numbers" in the Admiralty, and in several discussions arrived at a series of proposals which would help to ease the Admiralty's problem [viz. manpower shortage], and at the same time give Canadian personnel wider experience and a chance to gain prestige in other fields of naval warfare. The manning of the two "V"-class fleet destroyers (later named Algonquin and Sioux), and two flotillas of coastal craft, infiltration into H.M. cruisers to train personnel for manning two H.M.C. cruisers later on, the manning of three flotillas of landing craft for use in "Operation Neptune", the establishment of a beach commando for the same Operation, and the provision of ten CW officer candidates a month for training and subsequent loan to the R.N., were all agreed upon, and the manning of two escort carriers and a training cruiser was discussed.

The proposals were then put into the hands of the British Prime Minister who personally requested Mackenzie King to lend the necessary personnel.²⁰

Section 2

Personnel appointments

With authorization to establish RCN Beach Commando "W" now achieved, selection and appointment of volunteers could proceed. Having a complement of twelve officers and seventy-two ratings, the Commando's organizational structure would be:

Principal Beach Master (PBM)
Deputy Principal Beach Master (D/PBM)
Administration and Stores Officer

<u>W-1 Beach Party</u>	<u>W-2 Beach Party</u>	<u>W-3 Beach Party</u>
Beach Master (BM)	Beach Master (BM)	Beach Master (BM)
2 Asst. Beach Masters (ABMs)	2 Asst. Beach Masters (ABMs)	2 Asst. Beach Masters (ABMs)
2 Petty Officers (POs)	2 Petty Officers (POs)	2 Petty Officers (POs)
2 Leading Seamen (L/S)	2 Leading Seamen (L/S)	2 Leading Seamen (L/S)
6 Ablebodied Seamen (ABs)	6 Ablebodied Seamen (ABs)	6 Ablebodied Seamen (ABs)
14 Ordinary Seamen (ODs)	14 Ordinary Seamen (ODs)	14 Ordinary Seamen (ODs)

N.B. An extra OD might be added as body guard and messenger for the PBM.

Although the D/PBM subsequently acquired the additional title of Commanding Officer (C.O.), the PBM still retained overall authority. The PBM and, upon becoming C.O., the D/PBM were Acting Lieutenant-Commanders, while the Administration and Stores Officer, the 3 BMs and eventually all 6 ABMs held Lieutenant rank. Organized originally with 6 POs and 6 L/S, the actual number for each of these varied from time to time; and while authorized at the outset to carry 18 ABs and 42 ODs, the Commando ended up having virtually no ratings in the latter category.

On Sept. 5 SCNO(L) recommended the appointment of Acting Lt. Cdr. R.B. Wadsworth, RCNVR, as Staff Officer, Combined Operations (SO(CO)) to the Director of Warfare and Training (DWT) at NSHQ.²¹ Serving at the time in the Mediterranean and having worked previously in Combined Operations with W.S. Brooke, Wadsworth would take over the Ottawa post on Dec. 14 after spending November visiting Combined Operations headquarters and several bases in UK.²²

In his Sept. 14 secret memorandum to SCNO(L), the Naval Board Secretary announced the Cabinet War Committee's agreement to provide manpower for one Beach Commando and three major landing craft flotillas to serve with the Royal Navy in Combined Operations as wholly Canadian-manned units.²³ This "fresh commitment" included the proviso that sufficient personnel for the Beach Commando and for one of the three flotillas would be sent overseas as soon as possible.²⁴

On the same day, NSHQ issued a general distribution Naval Message requesting "medically fit" volunteers for these two parts of Canada's expanded participation in Combined Operations, with "preference of selection ... given to those who through no fault of their own have spent a considerable period ashore".²⁵ The "medically fit" stipulation likely derives from remarks contained in a Dec. 31, 1942, letter to CCCS from *HMCS Niobe's Senior Medical Officer (SMO) who referred to the steadily increasing number of Canadian officers and ratings being discharged "medically unfit" for Combined Operations. Accordingly, the SMO recommended from a medical point of view that special attention should be given to the following requirements;²⁶

* HMCS Niobe, the Canadian Naval Depot and Manning Pool which occupied the former Smithston Institute premises near Greenock in Scotland, was commissioned on Dec. 15, 1941.²⁷

1. under thirty-five years of age;
2. mental stability, with no family history of mental disease or disorder;
3. no history of chronic illness (e.g. bronchitis, asthma, TB, rheumatism, arthritis, heart, ear);
4. standard visual acuity and hearing;
5. free from VD.

On Sept. 17 NOIC, HMCS Hochelaga II in Montreal proposed the name of Lt. Cdr. W.M. Macdonald, RCNVR, to NSHQ as PBM and three days later Lt. Cdr. W.G. Duggan, RCNR, also applied for the position.²⁸ As we shall see shortly (vide infra, p.13), Macdonald succeeded in gaining the appointment.

SCNO(L) requested the Chief of the Naval Staff on Sept. 26 to have the Beach Party personnel arrive in the UK around the beginning of November if possible "with an aggressive Lieutenant Commander to be Principal Beach Master".²⁹ Meantime SCNO(L) advised NSHQ on Sept. 24 that he had given SO(CO), W.S. Brooke, Naval Board's Secret Docket N.S. 1037-34-1 which included the Sept. 14 memorandum about the Canadian Government's recent Combined Operations decisions (vide supra, p.9).³⁰

On Sept. 27 Secretary, Naval Board sent SCNO(L) a SECRET Memorandum entitled COMBINED OPERATIONS, which outlined arrangements for providing personnel to man the Beach Commando, the First LCI(L) Flotilla and the Squadron Administrative staff.³¹ Those of the memorandum's ten paragraphs which affect the Commando are herewith paraphrased:³²

2. Officers to be volunteers from Canadian sources, except in the case of the flotilla officers and 12 C.O.s from the UK and 3 lieutenants or sub-lieutenants, RCNVR, who have been trained in Combined Operations on Canada's West Coast.³³

3. 20 volunteer lieutenants or sub-lieutenants, RCNVR, to be appointed to Combined Operations School at Comox, B.C. to maintain the Canadian Navy's commitment and for training to man the Second LCI(L) Flotilla.³⁴
4. Substantive ratings for the initial draft to UK for combined operations include 24 Staff positions, 213 for the First Flotilla, and 73 (made up of 6 POs, 6 L/S, 18 ABs and 43 ODs) for the Commando. Total = 310.³⁵
5. Among the 310 substantive ratings (vide supra #4) are 8 L/S and 40 ABs or ODs who have received Combined Operations training on the West Coast.³⁶
6. Taking into account the number of ratings required for draft to Comox and the number to be drafted from that Base, it shows that a total of 374 volunteers will be needed to carry out the overall arrangements.³⁷
7. It is desirable that ratings manning the First Flotilla shall have some knowledge of Signals. "If possible, the Depot is to endeavour to select ratings who have failed the St. Hyacinthe Signal Course."³⁸

Parenthetically, it is of interest to note in relation to the foregoing that the Minutes of the Nov. 29 Naval Board meeting (#138) state that³⁹

personnel committed to man three Flotillas of LCI(L), one Beach Party and staff are being provided under the following scheme:

- (a) From untrained personnel from Canada (these have already been supplied)
- (b) From ratings trained in the West Coast School
- (c) From Canadian personnel at present serving with Combined Operations in the United Kingdom

Replacements, the Minutes add, are to be provided from the West Coast School.

In an Oct. 4 internal memo, SCNO(L) suggested "W" Commando members be warned that on arrival in Britain they would probably be put into khaki and, upon completion of training, be permanently attached to the Army.⁴⁰ A week later SO(CO) advised SCNO(L)'s Staff Officer (Personnel) that he expected the Canadian unit to arrive towards the end of

October and train in HMS Armadillo.⁴¹ On Oct. 26, NSHQ informed SCNO(L) in a "secret" signal that the ratings would arrive before Nov. 5 and the officers on Dec. 1: "It is regretted", the signal concluded, "that officers cannot be sent sooner."⁴² Meanwhile, concerning an Oct. 21 query from C.O., HMS Armadillo (Lt. Cdr. E.A. Davis, RN), SCNO(L) requested Capt. Buxton to keep "W" personnel all-Canadian and, if the policy of attaching Beach Commandos to Army Units is continued, to attach "W" to some Canadian Army unit.⁴³ Buxton's Nov. 23 reply stated in part: "... the question of the allocation of RCN BC "W" is now under consideration."⁴⁴

Captain F.L. Houghton, RCN, who had replaced Cdr. Price as SCNO(L) as of Nov. 5,⁴⁵ describes some aspects of what "W" personnel might expect in these words in a Nov. 23 memorandum to C.O., HMCS Niobe:⁴⁶

... they are trained for duties on beaches at the time of an assault, dressed in khaki and are attached to an Army unit instead of a ship or naval establishment. The life is strenuous and they are quite exposed to the elements as well as the enemy..... Because of the duties assigned to a beach party the physical standards required is equal to the highest Army standards and even men selected on this basis sometimes lack the necessary stamina.

Most of the ratings selected to join "W" arrived in the United Kingdom from Canada on Oct. 30 and by Nov. 5 a total of seventy-eight (made up of 2 POs, 5 L/S, 23 ABs and 48 ODs) had reported to HMS Armadillo, where S/Lt. J.G. Walker, RCNVR, acted as liaison officer to both SCNO(L) and HMCS Niobe.⁴⁷ In order to conform to the authorized number for each substantive category (vide supra, p.8), certain additions and reductions would have to be effected in due course.

The first major indication regarding officer selection for "W" appears in Daily List of Appointments No. 218/43 issued on Oct. 21. In referring to this Daily List, which he enclosed in his Oct. 25 memorandum (on the subject of Combined Operations) to SCNO(L), the Naval Board Secretary notes certain decisions regarding present and future "W" officer appointments, viz.⁴⁸

Paragraph "E"	Assistant Squadron Officer (1 required) Lt.(n) J.K. Macbeth, RCNVR
Paragraph "G"	First Lieutenants (12 required) # 6. S/Lt. E.G. Finley, RCNVR
Paragraph "L"	Principal Beach Master (1 required) Lt. Cdr. W.M. Macdonald, RCNVR
Paragraph "M"	Staff Officer for PBM yet to be selected
Paragraph "N"	Beach Masters (3 required) to be selected from "W" after training with RN
Paragraph "O"	Assistant Beach Masters (6 required) to be selected from "W" after training with RN
Paragraph "P"	"W" officers, RCNVR: 1. Lt. J. Bentley; 2. Lt. L.O. Campbell; 3. Lt. R.J. Johnstone; 4. Lt. A.D. Rayburn; 5. Lt. P.A. Bridle; 6. S/Lt. O.H. Rumpel; 7. S/Lt. K.G. Crowhurst; 8. S/Lt. R.I. Shales; 9. S/Lt. F. Angus; 10. S/Lt. G.V.C. Baum.
Paragraph "Q"	First Lieutenants (20 required). Appointed HMCS Givenchy III for training for Second LCI(L) Flotilla. #15. S/Lt. J.B. Cronin, RCNVR

Notwithstanding the information contained in Paragraph "L" and Paragraph "P", HMCS Niobe advised HMS Armadillo on Oct. 26 that the names of the officers forming RCN Commando were not yet known but such information would be communicated immediately it became available and that the Party's senior officer would telephone to the Ardentiny base upon arrival in UK.⁴⁹

On Nov. 25 Combined HQ for C-in-C Canadian North-West Atlantic signalled HMCS Niobe and SCNO(L) that the following officers had embarked that morning in HMT Mauretania at Halifax for passage to UK and service in Combined Operations.⁵⁰

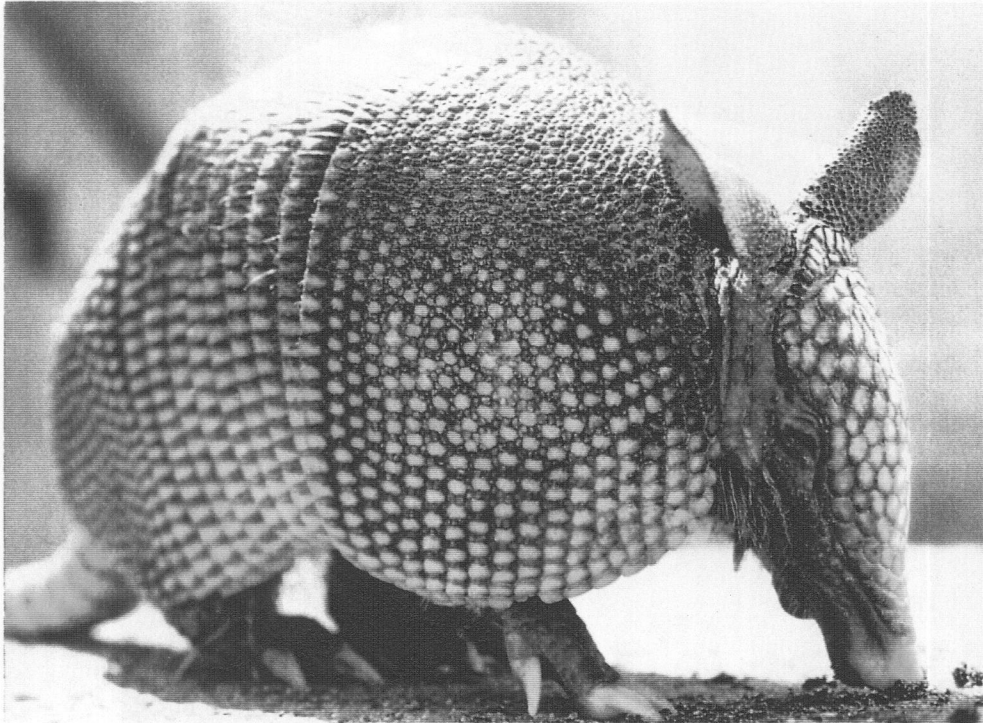
Lt. Cdr. W.M. Macdonald; Lts. A.D. Rayburn, J. Bentley, C. Hatch, N.W. Gooderham, R.J. Johnstone, L.O. Campbell, L.S. Kyle, J.B.B. Shaw, O.H. Rumpel; Lt.(n) J.K. Macbeth; S/Lts. F. Angus, R.I. Shales, G.V.C. Baum, K.G. Crowhurst, E.G. Finley.

Before all "W" officers began their formal training, several personnel changes had already occurred, viz.:

1. Bridle was apparently reappointed elsewhere.
2. Macbeth and Finley, both of whom had been originally assigned to LCI(L)s, joined "W" as replacements for Baum and Rumpel who transferred to a Canadian LCI(L) flotilla.⁵¹
3. Lt. D.M. Sutherland, First Lieutenant in HMCS Niobe, came to "W" on Nov. 23.⁵²

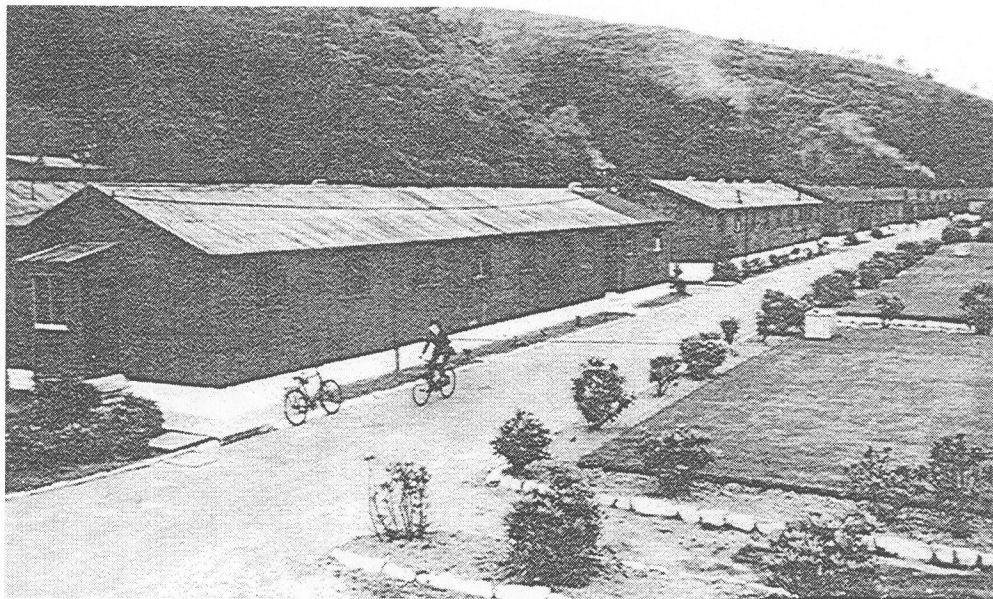
By Dec. 6, when the full officer complement had reported to HMS Armadillo, it was disposed as follows:

PBM	Lt. Cdr. W.M. Macdonald
D/PBM . . .	Lt. R.J. Johnstone
BM's	Lt. D.M. Sutherland (W-1)
	Lt. C. Hatch (W-2)
	Lt. L.O. Campbell (W-3)
ABMs	Lt. E.G. Finley and S/Lt. K.G. Crowhurst (W-1)
	Lt. A.D. Rayburn and S/Lt. R.I. Shales (W-2)
	Lt. J.K. Macbeth and S/Lt. F. Angus (W-3)
Spare	Lt. J. Bentley (acting Administration officer)

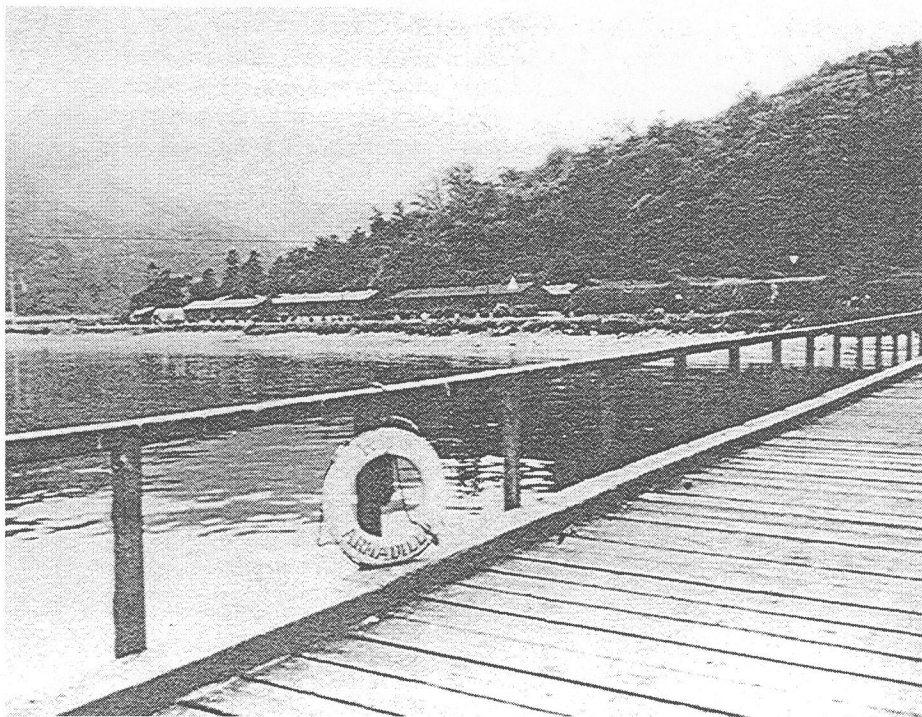


HMS ARMADILLO
ARDENTINNY, ARGYLL
SCOTLAND

HMS Armadillo



Parade Ground



Beach & Jetty

HMS Armadillo



Wardroom

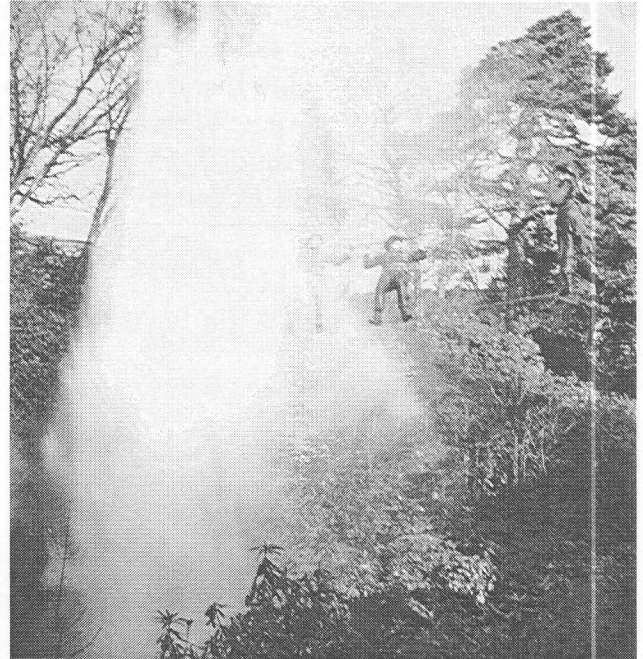


RN Beach Commando "C"

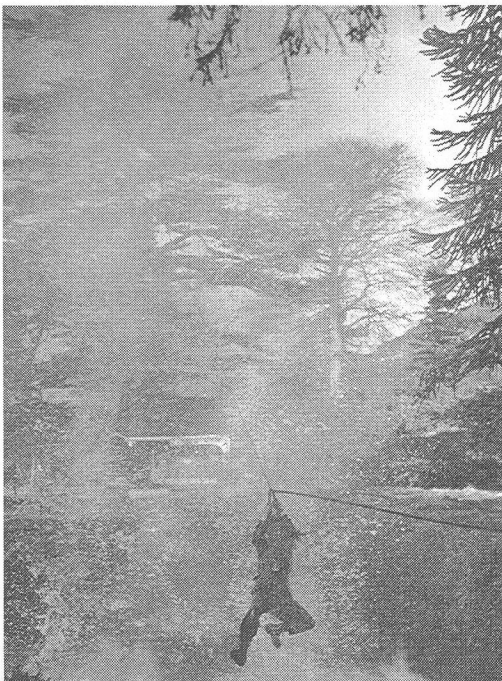
The following ten pages of photographs, taken by Lt. Gilbert A. "Gibby" Milne, RCNVR (pictured below), show various aspects of the training which "W" underwent while stationed at HMS Armadillo in Scotland from November 1943 until mid-February 1944.



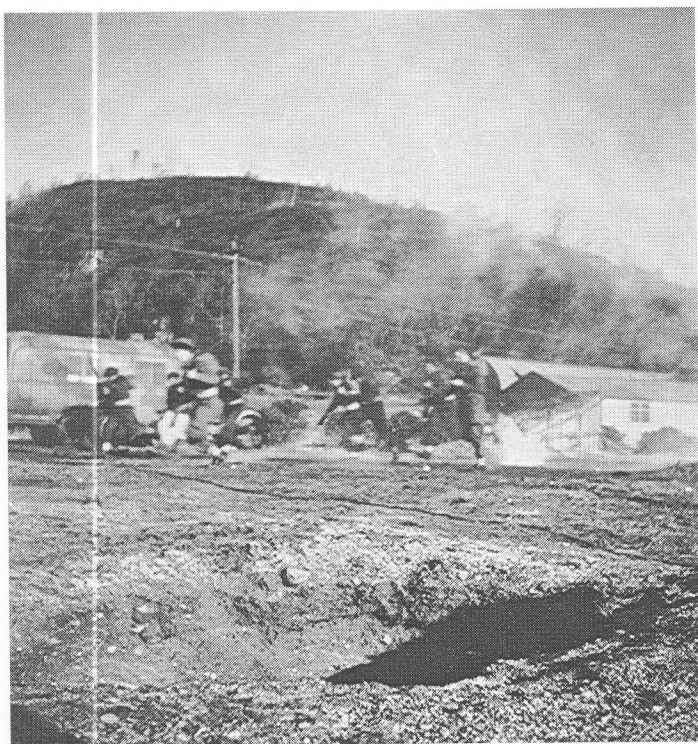
ASSAULT COURSE TRAINING



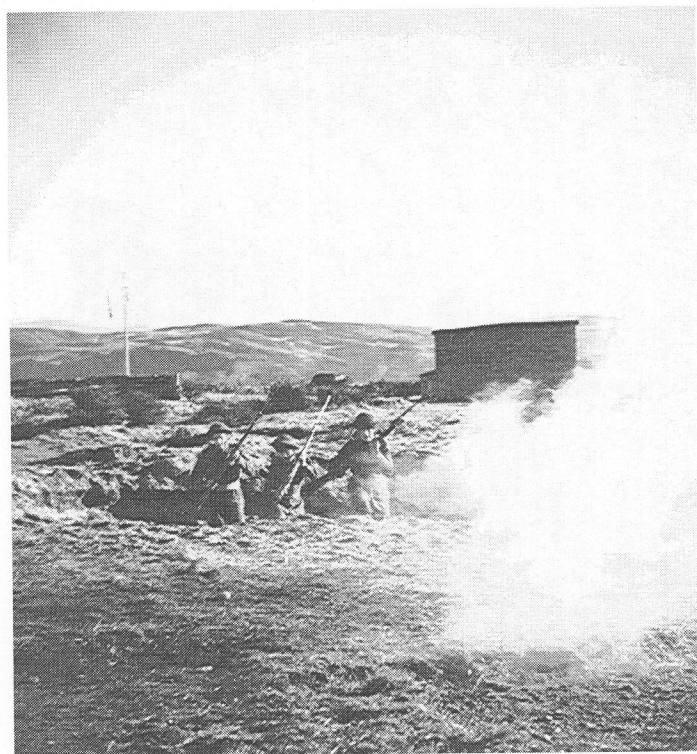
Traversing a Ravine



Along the "Death Slide"



From Open Ground



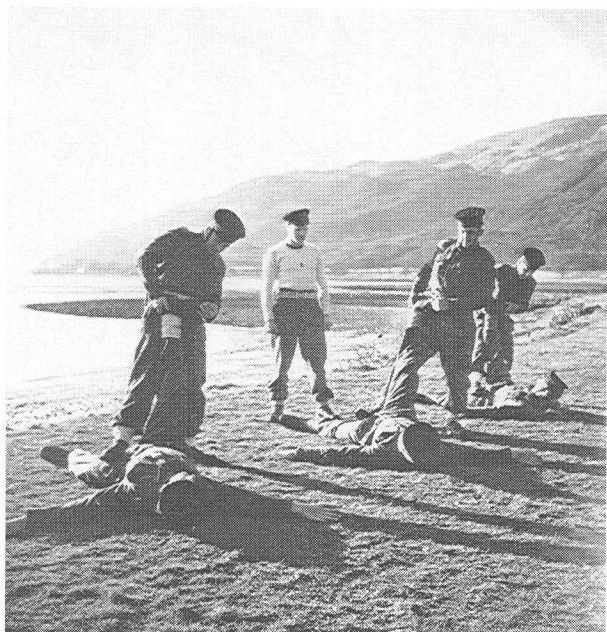
Into a Shell Hole



Charging Ahead



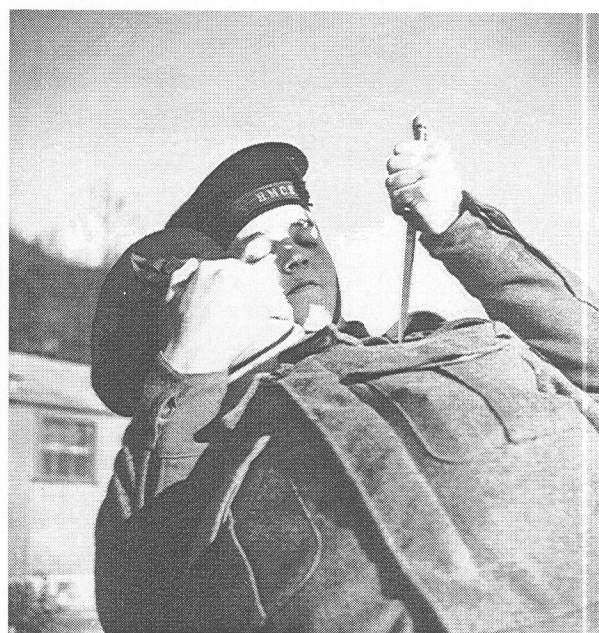
Up and Over



Unarmed Combat

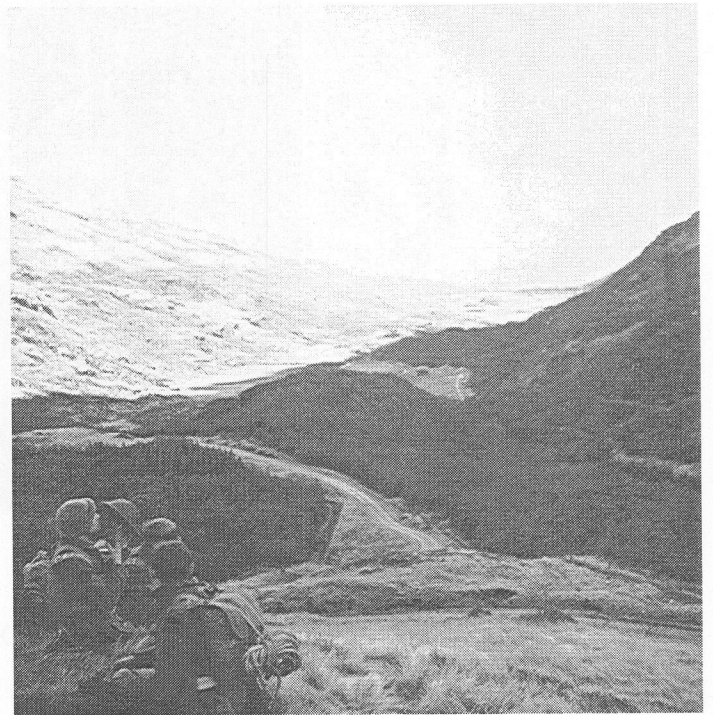
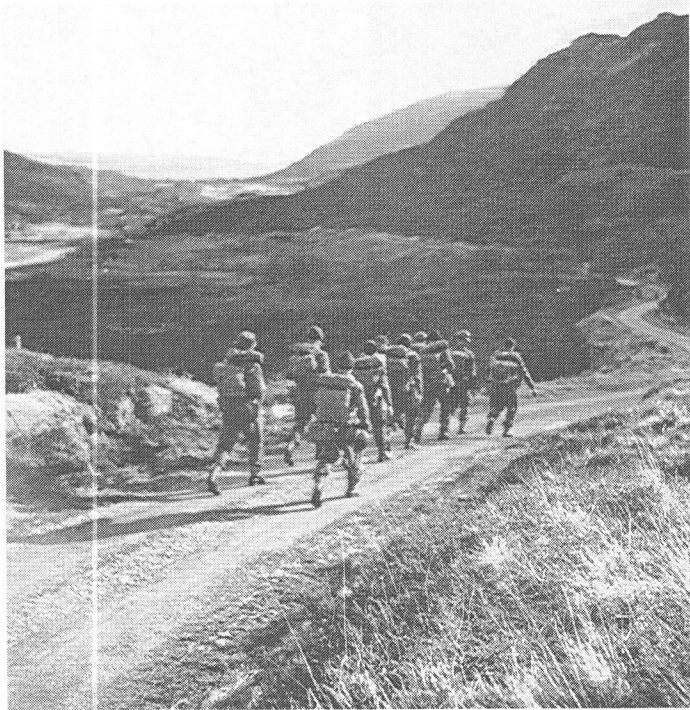


Left: J. Skinner; Right: J. Joyce



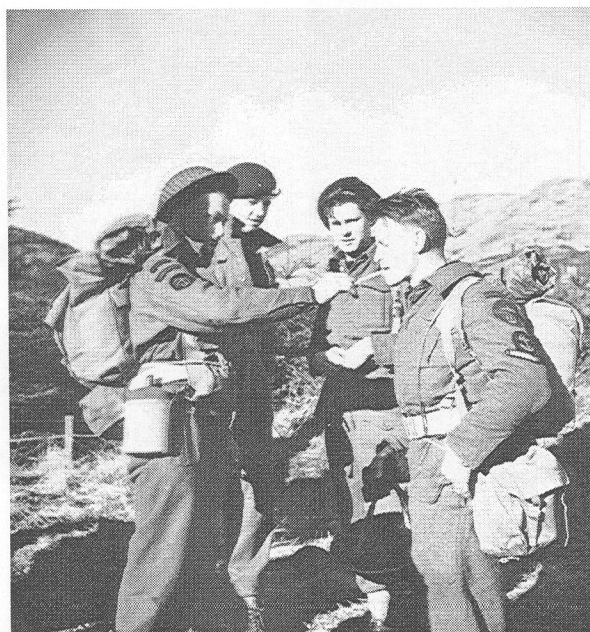
Left: H.D. Smith; Right: F.C. Albrechtson

Route March in the Scottish Hills

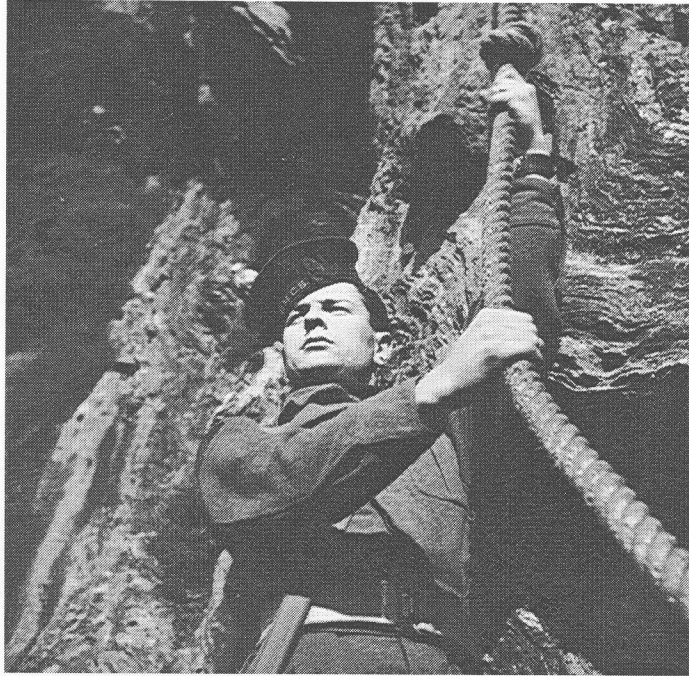


W-2 Beach Party

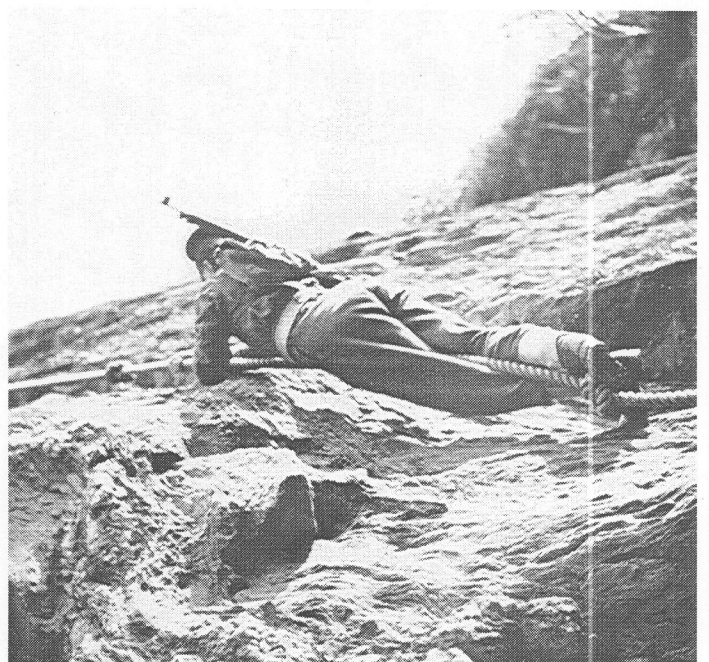
Camouflaging Steel Helmets

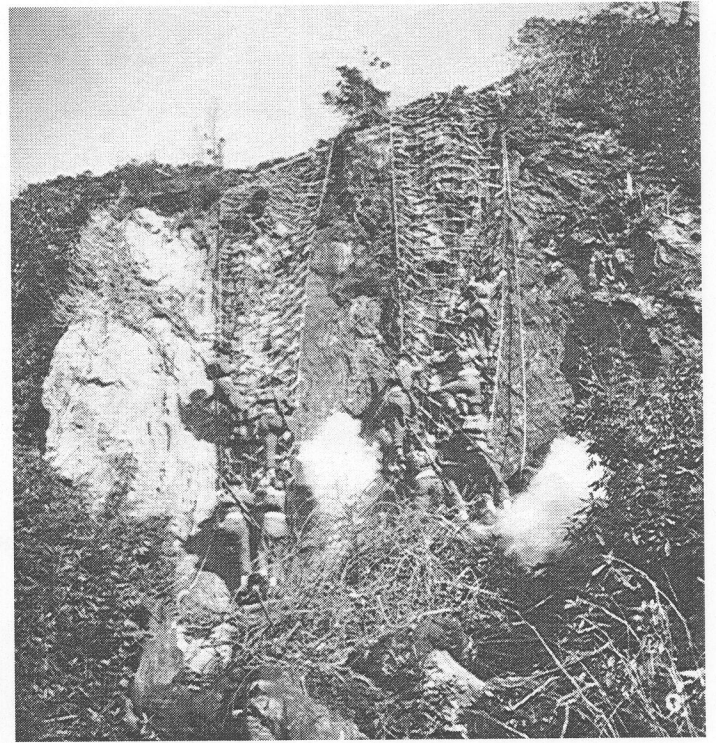


L/R: R. Barnes, D. Kennedy, W.A. Burden, D. McIntyre

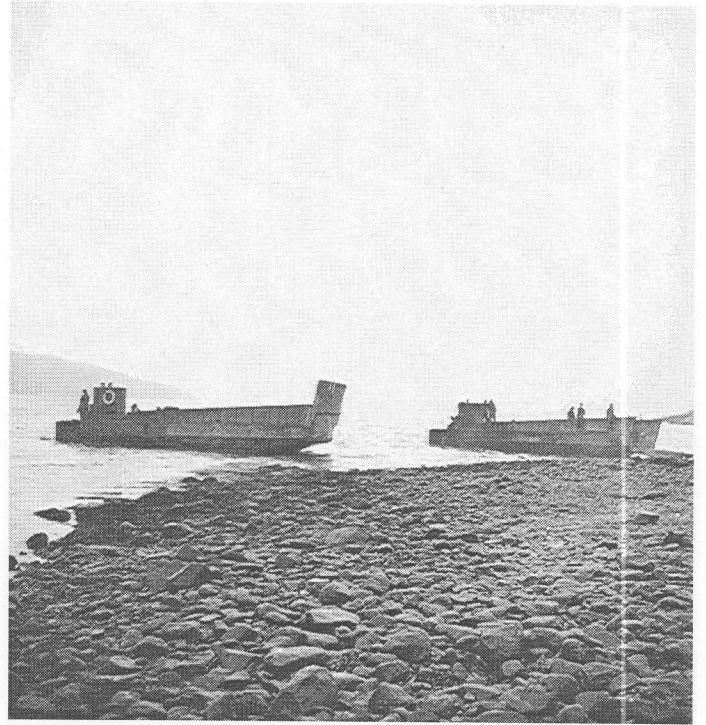


D.W. Smiley - Cliff Climbing

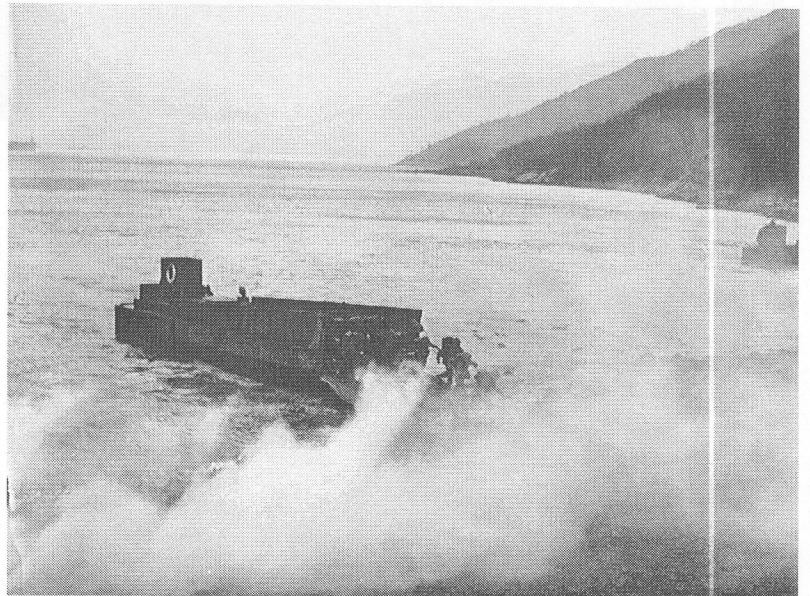
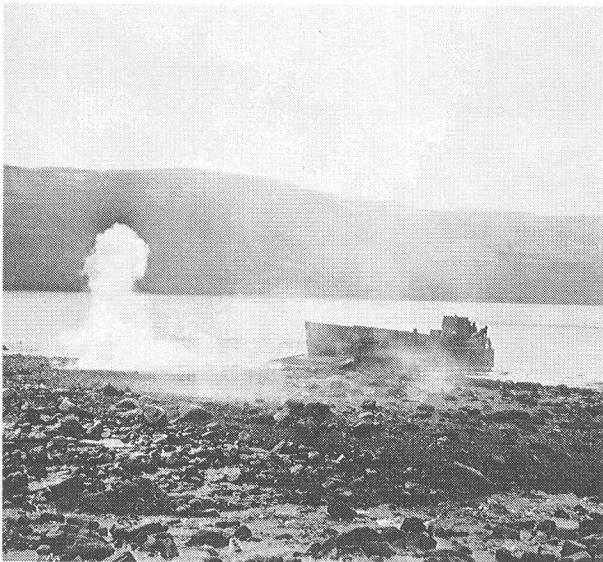




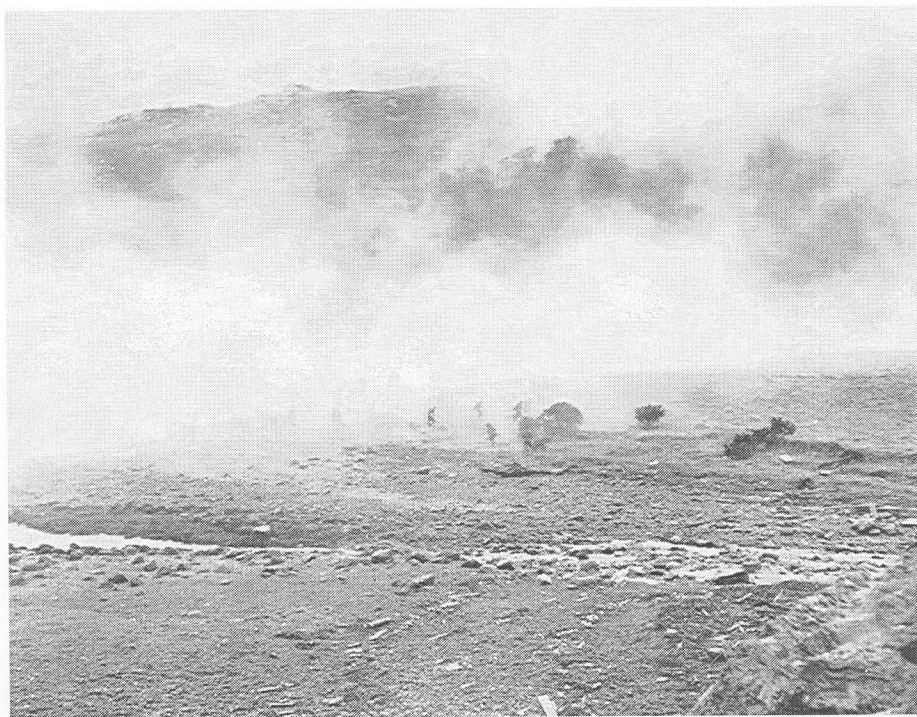
Using Rope Ladders to Scale a Rock Face



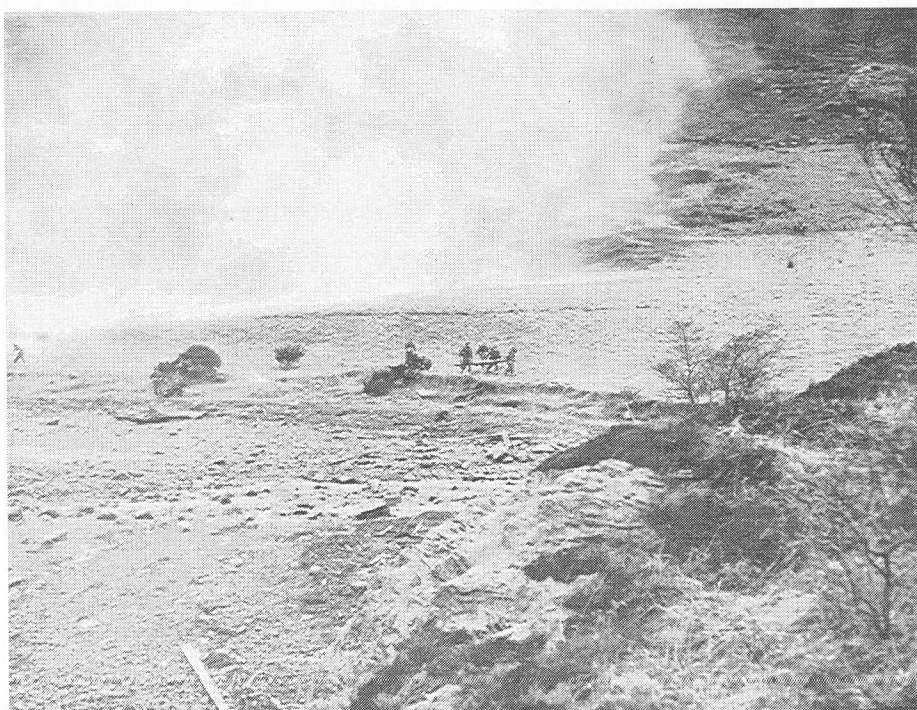
**LCMs Beaching*

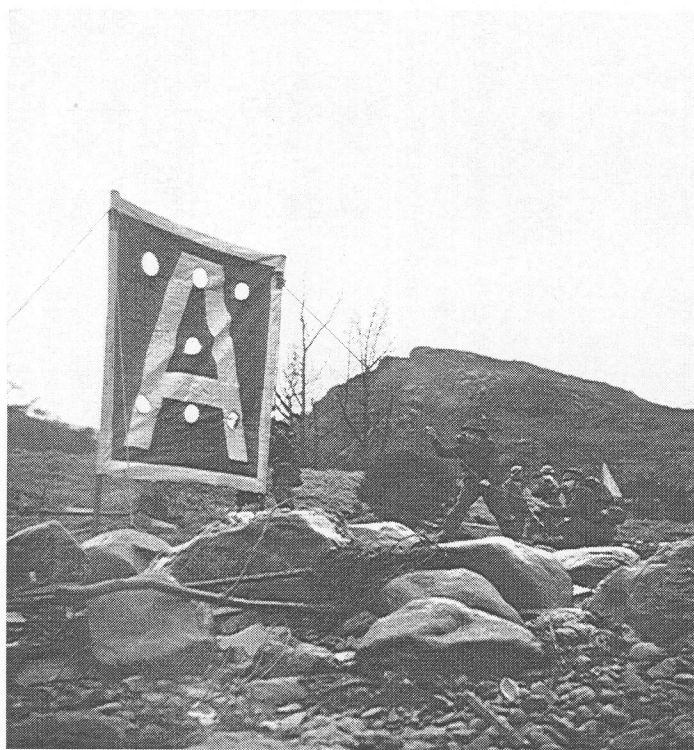


**LCM = Landing Craft Mechanized*



Beach Commandos storm ashore

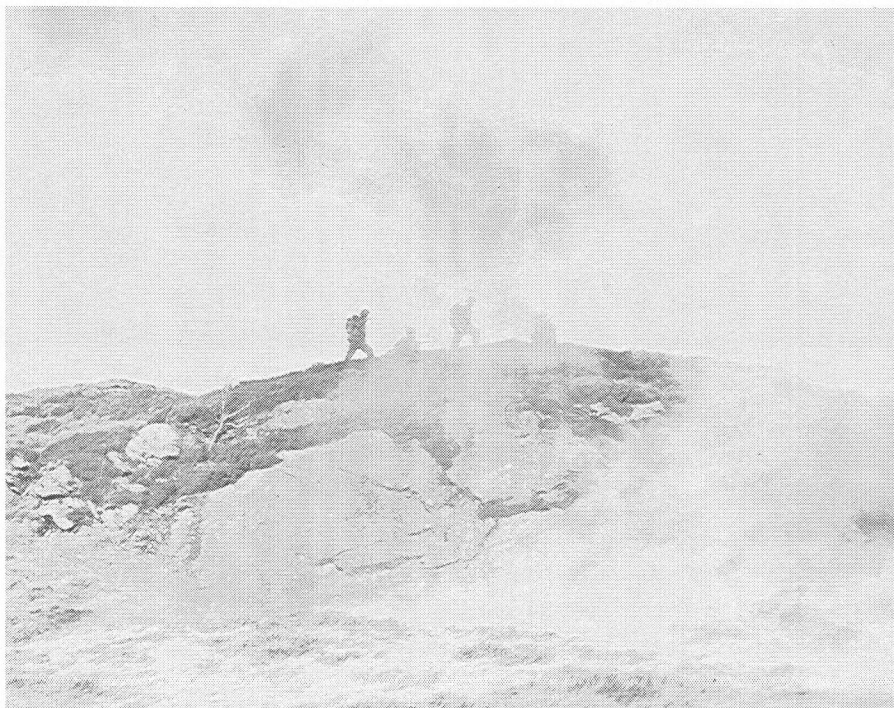




Setting Up a Communications Site

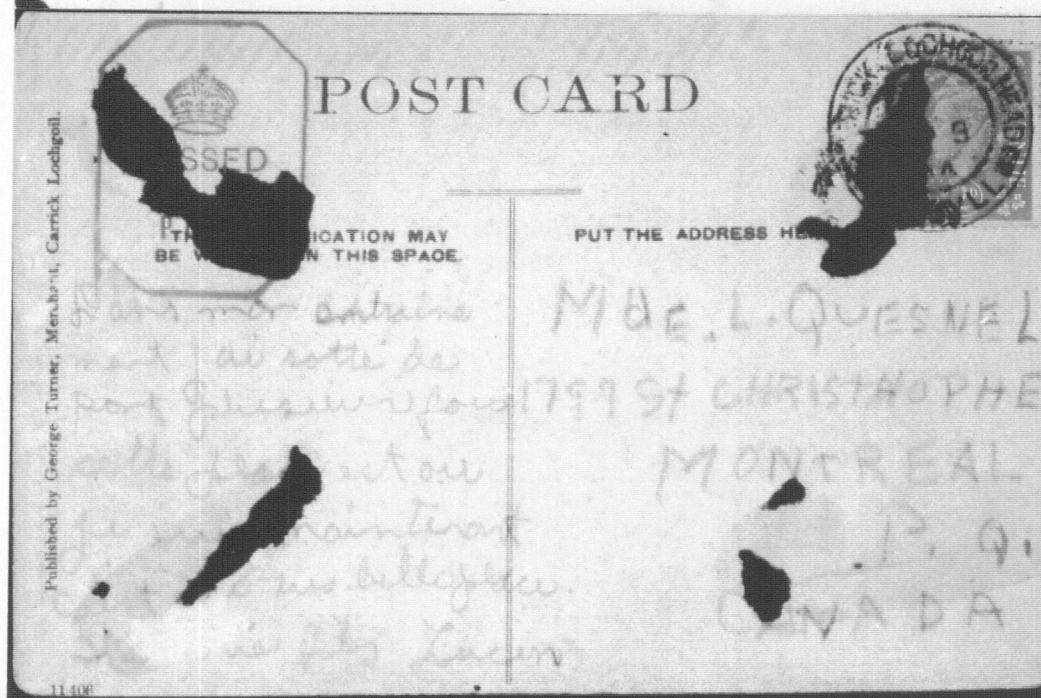


Heading for Higher Ground





Stronvochan Bridge at Glenfinart.



Above are both sides of a postcard postmarked Lochgoilhead, Argyll, sent by Lucien Quesnel early in 1944 to his mother in Montreal when "W" Beach Commando was training in HMS Armadillo at Ardentenny. The communication part reads:

"Dans mon entraînement j'ai sôté de pont plusieurs fois. Cette place est où je suis maintenant. C'est une très belle place. [Je suis ton] fils Lucien."

Section 3

HMS Armadillo -- November 5, 1943 to February 16, 1944

Before proceeding with an account of the training activities which "W" underwent during its fifteen-week attachment to HMS Armadillo, certain "house-keeping" matters will receive attention.

Located at Ardentinny on Loch Long in Argyll, Scotland, HMS Armadillo's main building (known as Glenfinart House) comprised an early 19th century Tudor-style manor house to which was added a 3-storey Georgian-type tower around 1895. The composite structure doubled as officers' quarters and wardroom, while a score of temporary huts accommodated staff and trainees. The extensive grounds, nearby beaches, and surrounding hills provided ideal natural settings for the task at hand. HMS Armadillo had been commissioned in 1942 as the main combined operations base for Beach Party (subsequently renamed Beach Commando) training. "W" constituted the last of twenty-two such units, many of which were established and trained elsewhere, and had seen or would see action in various war theatres, including North Africa, Italy, Southeast Asia, Dieppe and, of course, Normandy. Being entirely Canadian-manned, RCN Beach Commando "W" represented the only non-RN Beach Commando.

Combined operations allowance. SCNO(L) recommended to NSHQ on Nov. 17, 1943, that "W" officers and ratings be paid the allowance at RN rates and two days later informed C.O., HMS Armadillo that such a payment was under consideration.⁵³ Paragraph #20 of the "Progress report and survey of position as of 19th January 1944", which was prepared by SCNO(L) staff and enclosed in SCNO(L)'s RCN -- Combined Operations Activities memorandum of Jan. 27 to NSHQ, notes that NSHQ had already been requested to approve

the allowance "as a form of Hard-Lying Money".⁵⁴ On Jan. 31 SCNO(L) told PBM "W" that, in accordance with Naval Order 3313, the Combined Operations allowance may be paid as for the RN.⁵⁵ The matter dragged on for almost six months⁵⁶; then, towards the end of June, "W" first heard that on May 9 NSHQ had informed SCNO(L) of official approval for "hard lying money when embarked" and "field allowance in lieu of hard lying when on exercises or operations."⁵⁷ It is interesting to learn that the RN hard lying per diem rates at the time were: one shilling and six pence for lieutenants and above; one shilling for sub-lieutenants and below; and six pence for ratings.⁵⁸

Flashes and badges. In anticipation of the arrival of the Canadian Beach Commando, Lt. Cdr. E.A. Davis, RN (C.O., HMS Armadillo) requested SCNO(L) on Oct. 20, 1943, to provide 200 pairs of "Canada" flashes to be worn on khaki battle dress⁵⁹ and five days later SO(CO) advised his superior that HMCS Niobe would look after this request.⁶⁰ The same day Rear-Admiral H.E. Horan, RN, Commander Commanding Combined Operations Bases, Western Approaches (RACCCOB,WA) proposed to Davis that the "Canada" flash be worn below the "RN Commando" flash on battle dress.⁶¹ SCNO(L) reacted to this proposal by suggesting three guidelines to Davis on Nov. 19:⁶²

1. Officers will wear "Canada" flashes in gold with navy blue background on their blue and khaki uniforms, and in blue with white background on their white uniforms.
2. Ratings will be issued six "Canada" flashes in red with navy blue background and four in blue with white background.
3. The "Commando" (and not the "RN Commando") flash will be worn below the "Canada" flash. The "RN" part is to be eliminated.

On Nov. 26 SCNO(L) recommended that all Canadian naval combined Operations personnel wear the *Combined Operations badge below the "Commando" flash which in turn would be below the "Canada" flash.

Referring to their telephone conversation earlier in the day, S/Lt. Walker wrote to SO(CO) on Dec. 2 enclosing for consideration and approval a sample "Commando" flash, red on blue, with 3/8-inch lettering and colours similar to the "Canada" flashes issued gratis to Canadian ratings in accordance with Naval Order 3083.⁶³ The "Commando" flash would be worn below the "Canada" flash on each arm of jackets and greatcoats.⁶⁴

On Dec. 4 SO(CO) told PBM Macdonald that he was authorized to proceed with securing the "Commando" flashes if he approved Walker's sample; but he also reminded the PBM that HMCS Niobe had no authority to either purchase or gratuitously issue them.⁶⁵ However, "if Armadillo is prepared to issue these badges to the ratings and officers in the ordinary way", SO(CO) adds, "that is satisfactory".⁶⁶ In his Dec. 14 response to SO(CO), Macdonald points out that while HMCS Niobe was in a position to immediately issue the sample "Commando" flash,

It is, however, considered that these badges should be adopted only temporarily and it is requested that action may be taken to obtain approval for the acquisition of a new type badge, woven in the same manner as the "Canada" badges; the "Commando" badge now available will have a very poor appearance when worn with the standard "Canada" badge.⁶⁷

The PBM concludes by writing: "I would appreciate your assistance in this connection".⁶⁸

* The Combined Operations badge, which was circular in shape, depicts a bird (air force) at the top and, below it, a bren gun (army), both superimposed across the shank of an anchor (navy). The bird, bren gun and anchor are red in colour and the background is black.

In the margin of Macdonald's memorandum to SO(CO), which is marked "Rec'd Dec. 16", there are two pencilled notations (probably written by SO(CO)).⁶⁹

Personally I think the reverse of Lt. Cdr. Macdonald's suggestion would be better, viz. have "Canada" badges woven to match the "Commando" badge

Await Macdonald's visit

The second notation, which refers to the forthcoming Dec. 21 PBM-SO(CO) meeting, does not concern us for the moment.⁷⁰

Meanwhile on Dec. 13 Pay-Cdr. Pennington, RCNVR, on behalf of SCNO(L) replied to RACCCOB,WA's request of the previous week by concurring in the sample "Commando" flash forwarded on Dec. 2 by C.O., HMS Armadillo.⁷¹

In a Dec. 22 communiqué to C.O., HMS Armadillo signed by Capt. A.B. Fanshawe, RN, on behalf of RACCCOB, Western Approaches Command, who was on leave, official approval is finally announced of the proposals regarding the issue of "Commando" flashes contained in Armadillo's letter (No. 2658/30) of Dec. 2 and recorded in RACCCOB's minute No. C.30/2563F dated Dec. 7.⁷²

Paragraphs #15 and #16 of SCNO(L)'s Jan. 31, 1944, memo to PBM "W" summarize the authoritative situation with respect to flashes and badges. The former, which is entitled "Shoulder flashes", states that whereas the prefix "RN" is not appropriate, approval is given by Naval Order 3286 to wear the "Canada" badge and, below it, the word "Commando" in red letters on navy blue background.⁷³ Paragraph #16, which is entitled Combined Operations badge, begins by declaring that Canada's naval combined operations are being conducted as far as possible on general service lines, and then adds that although there is

no objection, however, to those serving in "W" wearing the Combined Operations badge while so attached,... the wearing or not of this badge must be determined by the PBM for "W" as a whole⁷⁴

and the decision must be communicated to SCNO(L). On Feb. 22 the PBM advised SCNO(L) that all "W" personnel would henceforth wear the Combined Operations badge on battle dress.⁷⁵

Macbeth escapade. Appointed originally to Combined Operations as Assistant Squadron Officer for Canadian LCI(L)s, Lt.(n) J.K. Macbeth transferred to "W" as additional officer on Dec. 15 and eventually became an ABM in "W"-2.⁷⁶ Shortly later, as we read in SO(CO)'s Jan. 27, 1944, memo to SCNO(L), he apparently transgressed King's Rules and Admiralty Instructions:"

It is believed that about Christmas or New Year's, the Boat Officer (HMS Armadillo), who is not a Canadian officer, took a landing craft without permission and was absent from the base for thirty-six or more hours. Accompanying him, I understand, were two Canadian officers. One may have been Lt. MacBeth [sic], RCNVR. These officers were merely attached for training and may have been technically on leave at the time the event took place. It is probable that the officers in question will be court martialled, and this may be mentioned.⁷⁷

Referring to the Canadian Commando's imminent departure for southern England and according to instructions received from RACCCOB,WA, Lt. Cdr. Davis advised Captain *G.J.3 in a secret memo dated Feb. 14 that three "W" ABMs (Lt. J.K. Macbeth, Lt. A.D. Rayburn and S/Lt. F. Angus) would "be retained in HMS Armadillo in connection with a

* G.J.3 refers to Naval Assault Group J-3 to which RCN Beach Commando "W" had recently been attached. Four such Groups (J-1, J-2, J-3, and J-4) formed Naval Assault Force J, which had responsibility for landing Allied armies on Juno Sector beaches during the invasion of Normandy six months later. Similarly, four other Naval Assault Forces (S, G, O, and U), which were used for the Normandy landings, had responsibility for Sword, Gold, Omaha, and Utah Sector beaches respectively.

Disciplinary Court to be held within seven days probably.⁷⁸ If so requested Rayburn would act as "prisoner's friend" to Macbeth or Angus, the two charged Canadian officers. While both Angus and the Boat Officer (S/Lt. Mortimer RNVR) were subsequently exonerated, Macbeth lost six month's seniority, received a "severe" reprimand, and was "required on board" for an indefinite period. His only consolation came in the wardroom after the case was closed when the President of the Court bought him a double rum for having successfully evaded the flotilla of harbour craft sent out to intercept the LCM gallivanting around Loch Long and the River Clyde.⁷⁹

PBM replaced*. As already noted (vide supra, p.13), the appointment of Macdonald as PBM of the RCN Beach Commando took effect within five weeks of his name being submitted to NSHQ on Sept. 17.⁸⁰ Despite this, on Dec. 10 SCNO(L) sent the Secretary of the Naval Board a Dec. 1 Daily Appointment List showing Lt. Cdr. Macdonald appointed to "Niobe add'l "W" as PBM".⁸¹ Macdonald's arrival at the Combined Operations training base in Ardentenny is evidenced by Armadillo's Dec. 3 communication to SCNO(L), viz.:

Drifter Golden Line will be at Gourock Pier Sunday 5th December to embark 11 officers for "W" Commando. (Macdonald + 10 others). ETA 1153⁸²

Beyond his involvement with the "flashes and badges" matter already described, the PBM indicated more relevant problems in a Dec. 14 memo to SO(CO):

Dear Brooke, Thank you for your letter of December 6 (ref. CS.5-B-44).

*For additional relevant documents concerning this matter, see Appendix VI.

Things here are proceeding reasonably well and all the officers are very keen about this undertaking. We will not, however, expect to fully settle down until such time as we proceed as a unit to the base to which we are to be attached.....

I understand that on the 21st or 22nd December the whole of the Canadian unit is to proceed on leave, returning on 2nd January, and that on our return we will take over the actual command of the unit and proceed with an additional week's training. I am strongly of the view that the sooner we can complete the programme here and proceed to our own base to continue our training, it will be better for all concerned. The situation as it exists presents many difficulties and it is quite impossible to understand just where to begin.

Yours sincerely

W.M. Macdonald.⁸³

The same day it so happened that SCNO(L) requested C.O., HMS Armadillo to have Macdonald attend a conference at 10 Haymarket in London on Dec. 17 or any convenient date thereafter.⁸⁴

The PBM actually reported to SCNO(L) on Dec. 21, just as "W" was about to proceed on two weeks leave over Christmas and into the New Year.⁸⁵ Without any official record to indicate what did transpire at the conference, one can but assume that the decision to relieve Macdonald as PBM had already been made some time previously. In any case, the day after the conference, Macdonald was appointed first to HMCS Niobe and then to HMCS Stadacona back to Canada on Dec. 27.⁸⁶ About a week later SO(CO) notes that Macdonald "failed to get on with the authorities at Armadillo" and was thus removed.⁸⁷ Referring to SCNO(L)'s Dec. 22 letter which had indicated Macdonald's unsuitability as a Beach Party officer, NSHQ informed SCNO(L) on Dec. 28 that while no PBM was then available in Canada and Macdonald had been relieved as "CO Beach Party", it was nevertheless urgent to find a Lt. Cdr., preferably under the age of thirty-five, who possessed "high qualifications of physical fitness and leadership."⁸⁸



Cdr. Denis J.P. O'Hagan, RCN(R), GM & bar,
Halifax, 30 August, 1954
(DND Photograph, HS-32511)
(former PBM, RCN Beach Commando "W")

Before turning to events related to the appointment of Macdonald's successor, it is worth noting SO(CO)'s remarks contained in a Jan. 27, 1944, memorandum to SCNO(L):

There is nothing official or unofficial, but it is believed that in the period 5th December to 22nd December, 1943, when the Canadian officers were first at H.M.S. "ARMADILLO", the authorities were hesitant to enforce observance of regular routine of the base. There seemed to be some mistaken idea that Canadians were not subject to normal regulations. I think that this has now been dissipated, but this "kindness" may have caused the feeling that everything at "Armadillo" was lax.⁸⁹

Prior to his Dec. 23, 1943, appointment as PBM⁹⁰ of "W" Commando, Lt. Cdr. Denis James Patrick O'Hagan, RCNVR, had spent considerable time in mine disposal work with the Army where he was awarded the *George Medal and bar. Because of Macdonald's rather sudden "dismissal" and SCNO(L)'s contention that no suitable relief could be found in Canada, and doubtlessly for various other reasons as well, it took until Jan. 28, 1944, for SCNO(L) to request Admiralty to appoint O'Hagan "Niobe additional for Combined Operations effective December 23, 1943".⁹¹

Following a meeting with Lt. Cdr. D. MacArthur, RNVR (HMS Armadillo's senior training officer) on Jan. 4, 1944, SO(CO) concluded that O'Hagan's suitability would be better known after he had completed a January 4-18 Beach Organization course.⁹² (N.B. On Feb. 18 C.O., HMS Armadillo sent SCNO(L) an assessment of O'Hagan's performance for the course (vide infra, p.26). In relation to the Jan. 4 meeting, SO(CO) also noted: 1). that the Admiralty had appointed O'Hagan to HMS Armadillo "for PMB with one or other of the parties"; and 2). that [D/PBM] Lt. R.J. Johnstone would make a suitable PBM.⁹³

* O'Hagan's George Medal was awarded Jun. 21 and presented Jul. 29, 1941 "for gallantry and devotion to duty"; his bar was awarded Jun. 9 and presented Dec. 3, 1943 "for gallantry and undaunted devotion to duty".

Having been confirmed as "W"'s Principal Beach Master, O'Hagan advised SO(CO) on Jan. 23 that he had tentatively disposed the present complement of officers as follows:⁹⁴

PBM Lt. Cdr. D.J. O'Hagan.	D/PBM Lt. Johnstone	(Lt. Bentley add'l)
<u>W-1</u> BM Lt. Sutherland.	ABM Lt. Finley.	ABM S/Lt. Crowhurst
<u>W-2</u> BM Lt. Hatch.	ABM Lt. Rayburn.	ABM Lt. Shailes [sic]
<u>W-3</u> BM Lt. Campbell.	ABM Lt. Macbeth.	ABM S/Lt. Angus

Training. As already mentioned (vide supra, p.12), a total of seventy-eight "W" ratings reported to HMS Armadillo by Nov. 5, 1943, to commence beach commando training almost a full month prior to the arrival of the unit's twelve officers. Accompanied by C.O., HMCS Niobe (Capt. E.A. Brock, RCNVR), RACCCOB inspected "W" ratings at Ardentinnny on Sunday, Dec. 5, just as the Commando officers were beginning to arrive.⁹⁵ A week afterwards, SCNO(L) told RACCCOB that the assistance being rendered by the Combined Operations organization in connection with the training of "W" was much appreciated.⁹⁶

In Paragraph 17 of his Jan. 19, 1944, Progress Report dealing with RCN Combined Operations activities, SO(CO) judges the late arrival of "W" officers to have been "rather a handicap".⁹⁷ Paragraph 18 and Paragraph 19 of the same report, which SCNO(L) sent to NSHQ on Jan. 27, contain the following respective observations:

1. The ... officers are more or less suitable but not markedly so, due mainly to age and seniority. Due to the nature of their employment, it is customary to attach quite young and active officers to the Beach Parties.⁹⁸
2. Reports indicate that the men assigned by RCN Sub Depot, "Niobe", have shown up well in training.⁹⁹

The first observation echoes information sent a little earlier from SCNO(L) implying that the "Canadian officers ("W") are rather older than is generally customary in RN Beach

Commandos."¹⁰⁰ The second seems somewhat at odds with C.O., HMS Armadillo's Dec. 17 statement, viz.:

... all ["W"] Able Seamen failed very badly in their [Leading Seaman] examination. These men were utterly inexperienced and should never have been recommended to sit the exam. This may have been due to the lack of experience of Sub-Lieutenant Walker.¹⁰¹

The PBM's view on these various matters are expressed in his final report of Aug. 31, 1944. Noting that because of their "late arrival" the officers had consequently been unable to take complete charge of their men and beach parties, the PBM states:

I consider that it would have been preferable to have trained the officers first and then let them train the men under the supervision of Armadillo training staff.¹⁰²

While crediting HMS Armadillo with providing a good assault course, general "toughening", and access both to several Combined Operations *pamphlets issued by HMSO and also to the beachmaster accounts of the recent Allied landings in North Africa, Sicily and Italy, the PBM questions the adequacy of the base's total inventory of three **LCMs and six ***LCV(P)s for training in beaching and unbeaching landing craft.¹⁰³

On Mar. 9 or 10 SCNO(L) informed NSHQ that a Canadian Naval Commando story, passed by Admiralty censors, was being "forwarded today via bomber. 112 pix following."¹⁰⁴ Written and with pictures taken by naval photographer Lt. G.A. Milne, RCNVR, this story about "W"'s training at HMS Armadillo was subsequently featured in the Saturday, April 22, 1944 edition of several Canadian newspapers.

* For a list of selected Combined Operations pamphlets, vide APPENDIX I.

** LCM = Landing Craft Mechanized.

*** LCV(P) = Landing Craft Vehicle (Personnel).

Towards the end of 1944 the RCN History Section stationed in London summarized "W"'s initial experience in these words:

Through December and January to the middle of February, 1944, the R.C.N. Beach Commando trained at H.M.S. "ARMADILLO", Ardenty [sic], Argyllshire, where they learned the elements of their job of organizing assault beaches, making the discharge of troops, stores and vehicles over the beach head as safe and orderly as possible.¹⁰⁵

One of only a few practical experiences for "W" officers occurred in February 1944 when Lt. J. Bentley and two other "W" officers were sent on Exercise "Roundabout" to observe unloading of stores on to beaches.¹⁰⁶ Bentley, who at the time was assistant to the D/PBM and who had sought release from the Commando after being hospitalized for most of January diagnosed with "Vincent Angina", was subsequently made Stores and Administration Officer.¹⁰⁷

With respect to the performance of the officers who attended the Jan. 4-18 Beach Organization course near Troon in Scotland, on Feb. 18 C.O., HMS Armadillo sent SCNO(L) the following extracts of a report from the Chief Instructor, Beach Organization Wing, Combined Training Centre, HMS Dundonald:¹⁰⁸

O'Hagan, D.J., Lt. Cdr. Although this officer had had no previous experience in Combined Operations, he had cooperated in the past with the Army. He was, therefore, quick to appreciate the Army problem in Beach Organization and it is considered that he would fit in admirably in a Beach Group.

Johnstone, R.J., Lt. This officer gave the appearance that he considered the military side was outside his sphere. He has a quick brain and, had he applied himself to the subject more strongly, he would have earned a good report.

Campbell, L.O., Lt. This officer worked very hard and showed great keenness. It is thought, however, that he might be loathe to change his views to fit in with the plans of the Beach Company Commander with whom he might have to work.

Sutherland, D.M., Lt. Derived great benefit from the course and assimilated with ease all the information which was given him. He has a very pleasant disposition.

Hatch, C., Lt. Full of common sense, very willing, and took a great deal of interest in the Course.

All of the above officers acquitted themselves very well.

On Mar. 15 C.O., HMS Armadillo sent SCNO(L) "Reports on RCNVR officers trained at HMS Armadillo", which may be paraphrased as follows:¹⁰⁹

O'Hagan, D.J., Lt. Cdr. After overcoming the initial disadvantage of joining a unit which had completed its R.N. Beach Commando training, he asserted himself as a leader in a most satisfactory manner. His extensive knowledge of ships, gear and cargoes should prove useful to him. This officer has submitted a design of a crane to facilitate the discharge of lorries and amphibions.

Johnstone, R.J., Lt. A senior lieutenant of ability and experience who is working well as "Number 1" of the Commando. Quiet and unassuming but a strong-minded and efficient officer.

Campbell, L.O., Lt. Has worked hard to make himself physically fit for the job, but unfortunately had to undergo an operation (and is now in hospital).

Bentley, J., Lt. This officer was under medical treatment for most of the time he was in Armadillo and is probably more suited to a less strenuous branch of the Service.

Hatch, C., Lt. After a very shaky beginning in which he felt that his long sea experience was being wasted, this officer settled down and proved himself to be an efficient and sound Beach Master. It is considered that he should be afforded an opportunity of returning to General Service after the operation.

Sutherland, D.M., Lt. A volunteer for Beach Commandos who has worked hard and has done well in every way both on and off duty.

Rayburn, A.D., Lt. A mature and sound type of officer who has an extensive knowledge of service conditions and of handling men. Cheerful and efficient.

Finley, E.G., Lt. A cheerful and efficient officer who has settled down well in the unfamiliar Beach Commando work. He has a good knowledge of Aircraft Recognition and is an expert Signaller.

Macbeth, J.K., Lt. (n) Is probably wasted in Beach Commandos as it is doubtful if he is strong enough physically for the type of work involved.

Angus, F., S/Lt. A keen and energetic officer, but he requires the firm supervision of a senior officer on and off duty.

Crowhurst, K.G., S/Lt. An exceptionally strong and well-built officer with a very fine power of command. His great ambition is to undergo a course at Whale Island. Arrangements had been made for him to attend a course when the Commando was appointed away from Armadillo. His Senior Officer, however, quite justifiably pointed out that he required to go there least of all.

Shales, R.I., S/Lt. A pleasant young officer who knows how to remain cheerful in all circumstances and to get on with the job.

Immediately following these assessments, the C.O. adds: "The ratings proved themselves to be exceptionally keen and intelligent. They retained their enthusiasm to the end in spite of a long period of training in "Armadillo".

SCNO(L) sent the PBM an *eighteen-paragraph communication on Jan. 31 requesting confirmation that its contents be read and understood by all officers. Basically it states that the Beach commando, as part of the RCN, is on loan to the RN like any HMC Ship. All personnel are to keep SCNO(L) and HMCS Niobe informed as to their whereabouts at all times and of any ill-health. Regulations are given with respect to the wearing of shoulder flashes and the Combined Operations badge. Regarding military and combined operations, it points out that ""W" will serve with the RN as may seem most expedient and will probably be attached to Force "J".¹¹¹ In a Feb. 22 memo to SCNO(L), the PBM confirms that the Jan. 31 document has been read and understood by all "W" officers.¹¹²

* In the left margin at the beginning of the eighteen-paragraph communication which was composed by "WSB" (that is, A/Lt. Cdr. W. Saurin Brooke), SCNO(L) has written: "SO(CO). You do these things very well indeed. FLH."¹¹⁰ (FLH refers to Capt. F.L. Houghton, RCN).

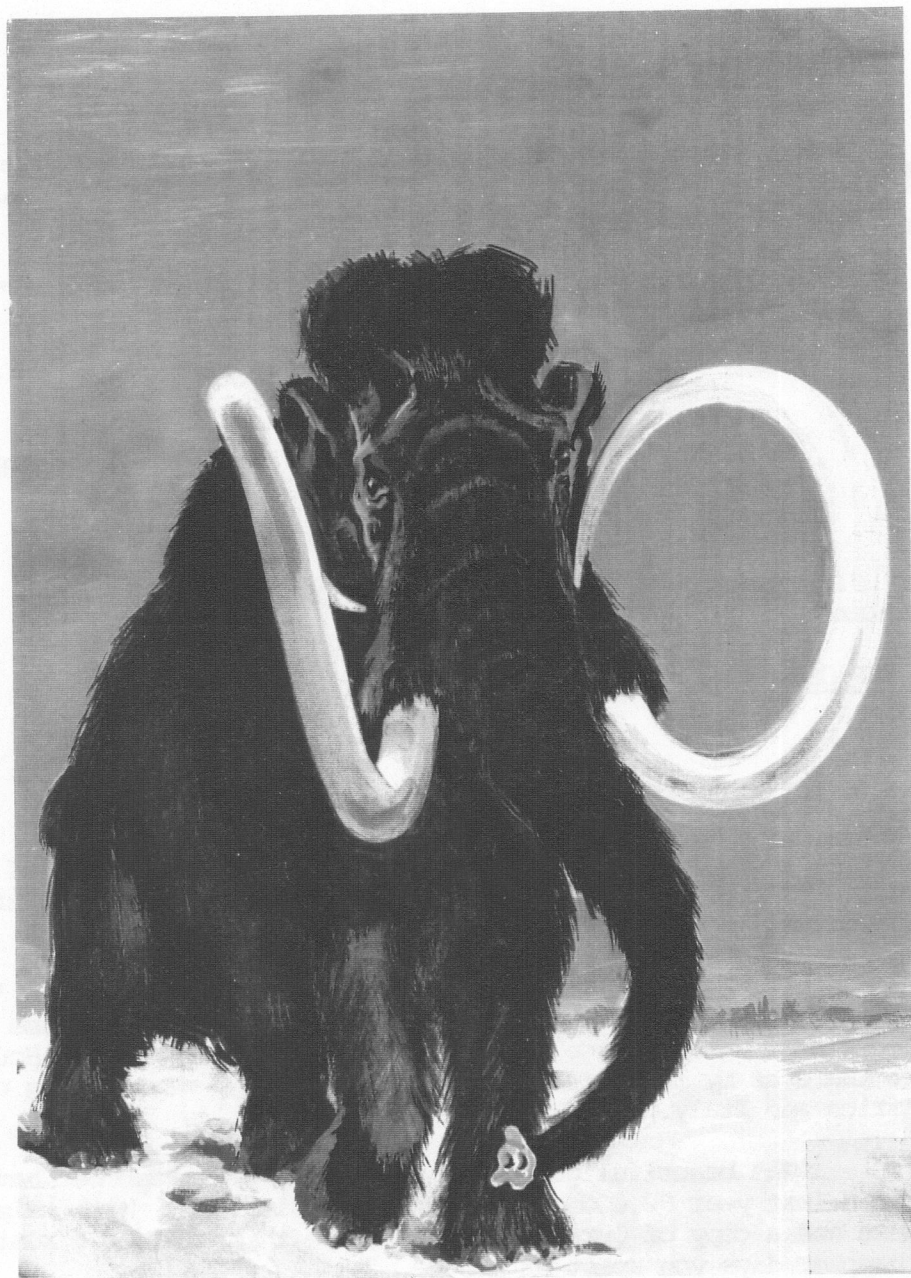
In answer to Admiralty's Feb. 10 request for "W" to be signalled [as] the Commando is at present unemployed and its early attachment is most desirable,"¹¹³ Commander Force J replied two days later saying "W" was "accepted now at [HMS] Mastodon and will work under GJ3".¹¹⁴ This decision bears out SO(CO)'s forecast in his Jan. 19 Progress Report to SCNO(L) that "W" would likely "be sent to Force "J" as the fourth attached Commando, and to some extent may be the spare unit for that Force".¹¹⁵ In Enclosure A of the report, SO(CO) showed Force J as being divided into:¹¹⁶

- J-1 (Capt. F.A. Ballance) in HMS Vectis at Cowes;
- J-2 (Capt. R.J.O. Otway-Ruthven) in HMS Grasshopper at Weymouth;
- J-3 (Capt. A.F. Pugsley) in Lepe House at Beaulieu; and
- J-4 (Capt. R.E. Jeffreys) in HMS Squid at Southampton.

Commodore G.N. Oliver was Naval Commander Force J which reported to Rear-Admiral Sir Philip Vian.

Accordingly, "W"'s *eight officers and seventy-three ratings (together with six tons of baggage) left Scotland on Feb. 16 and headed for their new base and attachment to GJ3 on the south coast of England.¹¹⁷

* Lt. Macbeth, Lt. Rayburn, and S/Lt. Angus were detained in connection with a Disciplinary Court (vide supra, p.21). Lt. Campbell and Lt. Bentley were respectively in hospital and on convalescent leave; the latter rejoined "W" on Feb. 18.¹¹⁸



HMS MASTODON
EXBURY, HANTS

HMS MASTODON

-- a postwar word from the owner of Exbury Estate --

Exbury Estate

EDMUND L. DE ROTHSCHILD

Estate Office : Exbury
Near Southampton
SO4 1AZ

Telephone: Fawley (0703) 897181

ELder/jjw

1st. March, 1985.

Lt. Cdr. J.K. Macbeth (Ret'd),
218, Maclaren Street # 401,
Ottawa,
Canada K2P 0L7

Dear Lt Commander.

Your interesting letter was sent to London when, of course, you really should have addressed it to Exbury where you were stationed during some of your war years.

I was indeed interested to know that you were with 'W' Commando and wonder if, by any chance, you were billeted at Inchmery House and did you know a cousin of mine, George Lane? I was the owner of Exbury House when you were there as my father died in 1942, however, I was serving overseas in North Africa and Italy.

The beautiful gardens which you so well remember have been kept up and last year 92,000 people came to visit them. With this letter comes a brochure and a copy of Our Exbury and I hope this will be a reminder of some of the happier days you spent at Exbury.

Yours sincerely

Edmund de Rothschild

Edmund de Rothschild.

Section 4

HMS Mastodon -- February 17 to April 3, 1944

Location of HMS Mastodon was in Exbury on the 250-acre Rothschild estate bounded by the Beaulieu River and the New Forest in Hampshire with the officers being billeted in the main building (known as Exbury House).

Personnel. Early in March certain "W" officer personnel and position changes occurred. Following an operation and convalescence Lt. Campbell left the Commando and on May 22 became Canadian Liaison Officer to Force J.¹¹⁹ He was replaced as W-3 BM by Lt. Hatch whose W-2 BM position was then assigned to W-2 ABM Lt. Rayburn. A new Canadian officer, Lt. H.G. Hampson, RCNVR, who had served with RN Beach Commandos, joined as the second W-2 ABM.¹²⁰

On Feb. 18 C.O., HMS Armadillo advised C.O., HMCS Niobe that he considered two "W" ratings, OD Beckman, K. (V.65150) and OD Armstrong, C. (V.61150), unsuitable for beach commando work, the former for medical reasons.¹²¹ With respect to Armstrong, he wrote: "... this rating proved to be dirty, slack and untidy. He showed little interest in his work and had a bad influence on other ratings".¹²² Both of them were drafted soon afterwards.

On Feb. 23 HMS Mastodon's Medical Officer informed PBM "W" about OD Tapper, H.: "On account of prolonged and continual disability, I consider this man unfit to continue in Commandos, his training being greatly interfered with on account of his disability."¹²³ According to "W"'s March monthly report, OD Westerman, L. (V.58750) replaced Tapper in W-3.

"W"'s D/PBM notified HMCS Niobe on Feb. 29 that warrants had been issued against two ratings AWOL for twenty-five hours.¹²⁴ Warrant No.1 against AB Joyce, W.F. (V.17772)

of W-3 resulted in a punishment of three days cells and nine days forfeit of both leave and pay: Warrant No.2 against AB *Burden, W.A. (V.43750) of W-2 resulted in a similar sentence but with an additional two days cells.¹²⁶

- (1) HMS Armadillo . C, V-2
Inveraray U
HMS St. Matthew V-1
Padstow V-3
- (2) Overseas A, D, G, H, K, N, O
- (3) Force J HMS Mastodon: P, W
HMS Vectis: L
HMS Cricket: S
- (4) Force S F, R, J
- (5) Force L E, M
- (6) Force G Q, T
- (7) Trained Officers:
(i) Training Staff . . Lt. Cdr. D. MacArthur, RNVR
. . . Lt. F.C. Whorrall, RNVR
(ii) Trained Pool . . . (list of 5 S/Lts & 6 Midshipmen)
(iii) Others

Thus, two parties were kept always on hand, so that "W" Commando might participate in an exercise if required. Two-thirds of the Commando has had leave, the remaining third has just gone.¹²⁸

Training. Entitled "GENERAL", the last section of "W"'s Mar. 16 monthly report is worth quoting in full.¹²⁹

Because Training facilities at "Mastodon" are limited, it is thought advisable to give the men the benefits of as much "outside" training as possible. The Commanding Officer, "Mastodon" and Captain G.J. One have been very helpful in this respect.

"Mastodon's" remoteness from any large town has been a drawback, although the number and calibre of entertainment within the camp has recently improved. Twenty-four hour leave once a week for Officers and ratings has just been approved by the Commanding Officer, "Mastodon". Expendable books have been received from the Staff Officer Special Services and indoor games are being supplied.

On Mar. 3 "W" asked HMS Volcano to provide transport for its party of six arriving three days later at Drigg for a course in land mines, bomb disposal, and booby traps.¹³⁰ The next day the PBM informed SCNO(L) that three officers (Lts. Crowhurst, Shales, and Angus, who are ABMs in W-1, W-2, and W-3 respectively) and three ratings (L/S McIntyre, Jarrett, and Joyce) had been selected to take the course beginning Mar. 7.¹³¹ After returning to Exbury, they presented a series of lectures to the rest of the Commando. In mid-March, Lt. Bentley and about a dozen ratings attended a similar two-week course in land-mine detection and disposal conducted near Southampton by the 128th Company of Army Pioneers.¹³²

"W" advised both HMS Excellent and SCNO(L) on Mar. 4 that Lt. Finley would be reporting at 1800 the following day to take a 10-day Aircraft Recognition course.¹³³ And in reply to "W"'s 031815A/March, HMS Excellent informed the Commando on Mar. 5 that Finley was to be accommodated in HMS Hornet.¹³⁴ After completing the course, Finley held several sessions on the subject with "W" personnel during the ensuing two months.

Around this same time, the PBM was in the process of making arrangements with Canadian [Army] Training Schools (CTS) for two ratings from each Party (viz. W-1, W-2,

and W-3) to receive instruction in jeep driving. Also through his efforts, Captain G.J.3 requested C.O., HMS Appledore to offer craft recovery training to as many "W" personnel as possible.¹³⁵

To conclude this section, statements about events which occurred during this period and which appear in the March and April monthly reports respectively will be presented without comment:

Owing to a lack of training and operational equipment (presumably en route to us) and the absence of certain facilities, Beach Drill has not been featured on the training programmes. The programme has been made up chiefly from the following:- Route marching, Signal Exercises, Rifle and Pistol shooting, Grenade throwing and Aircraft Recognition; and has been supplemented with lectures given by the Beach Masters and Assistant Beach Masters. One Training film in pontoon bridging has been shown. Others on Aircraft Recognition have been made available recently.¹³⁶

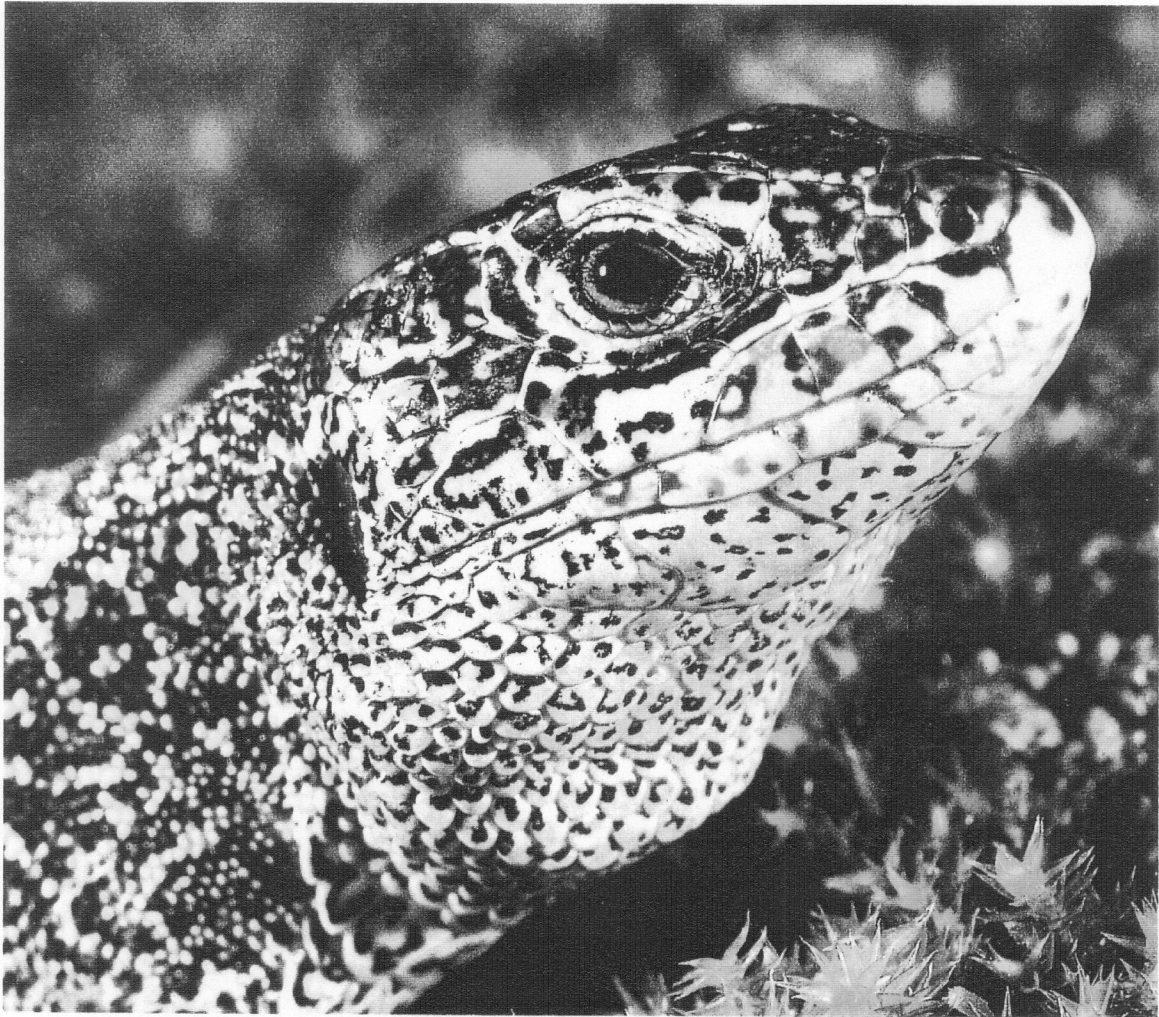
Participation in large-scale exercises was accomplished through the co-operation of G.J.One, the P.B.M. and officers of "P" Commando. Twenty-four ratings (8 from each party), myself [A/Lt. Cdr. O'Hagan] and Lieutenants MacBeth [sic], Angus and Shales took part in Exercise "Gold Braid". Six ratings (two from each party) and Lieutenants Johnstone and Hampson took part in Exercise "Trousers". Lieutenant Hatch and I [O'Hagan] attended Exercise "Prank" as observers.¹¹⁰

In order to clarify the matter of "W"'s attachment and role, which continuously caused concern among senior Canadian naval authorities both in Canada and UK, SO(CO) (accompanied by Capt. Godfrey, RCN, C.O., HMCS Prince Henry) spent Mar. 1 and 2 at Force J.1 headquarters in HMS Vectis at Cowes.¹³⁷ Although SO(CO)'s Mar. 4 report to SCNO(L) mentions being "courteously received", reassured of "W"'s attachment to Force J, and the visit "well worthwhile", his overall impressions appear in Paragraph 6:¹³⁸

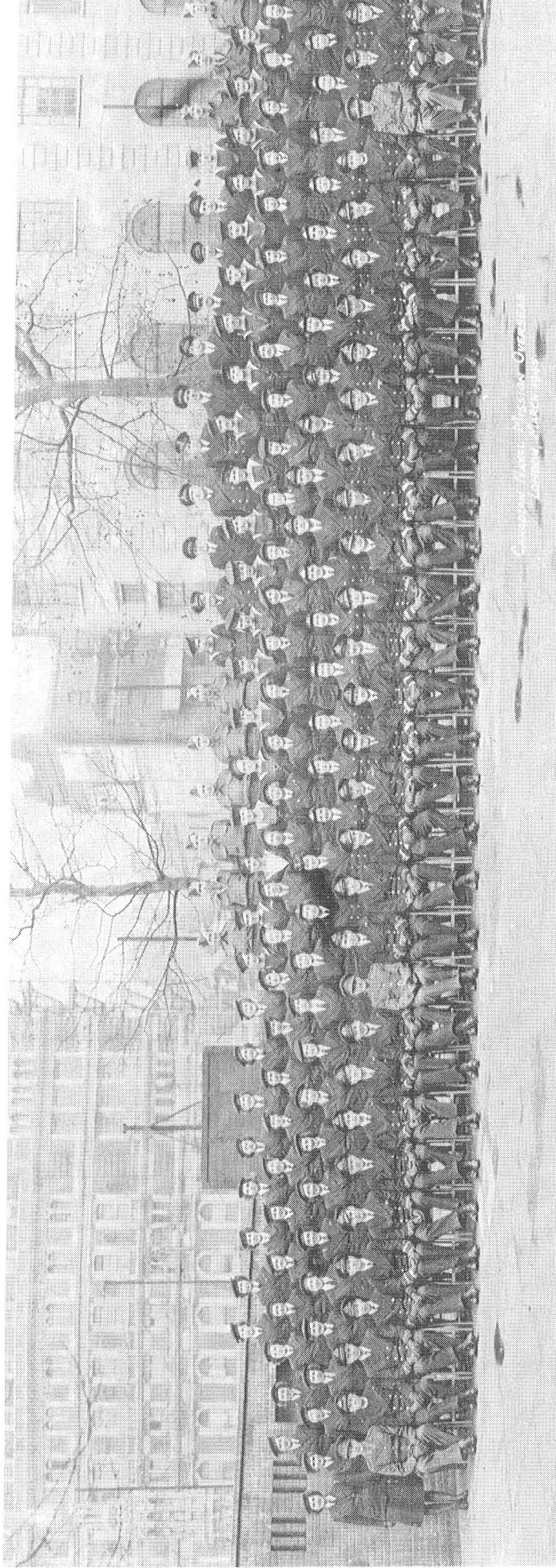
The "W" Commando is definitely the spare party, and as such will not participate in the major exercises or in any main assault. It is most likely, however, that the party will be required for diversionary assault, such as Salerno or Anzio.

To conclude Section 4, which has described "W"'s six-week stay in HMS Mastodon, we cite the relevant summary appearing in RCN History Section's narrative about the Normandy invasion written December 1944/January 1945;¹³⁹

There further refinements of training exercises added to the long list of the jobs the Commando knew how to do, from rendering safe beach obstacles, mines and booby traps to policing the beaching and discharge of landing ships and craft of all types. Facilities for training were limited at Beaulieu and after taking part with Force "J" in Exercise "Gold Braid" at the end of March the Commando moved to H.M.S. "LIZARD", Hove, Sussex, on the 3rd April.



HMS LIZARD
HOVE, SUSSEX

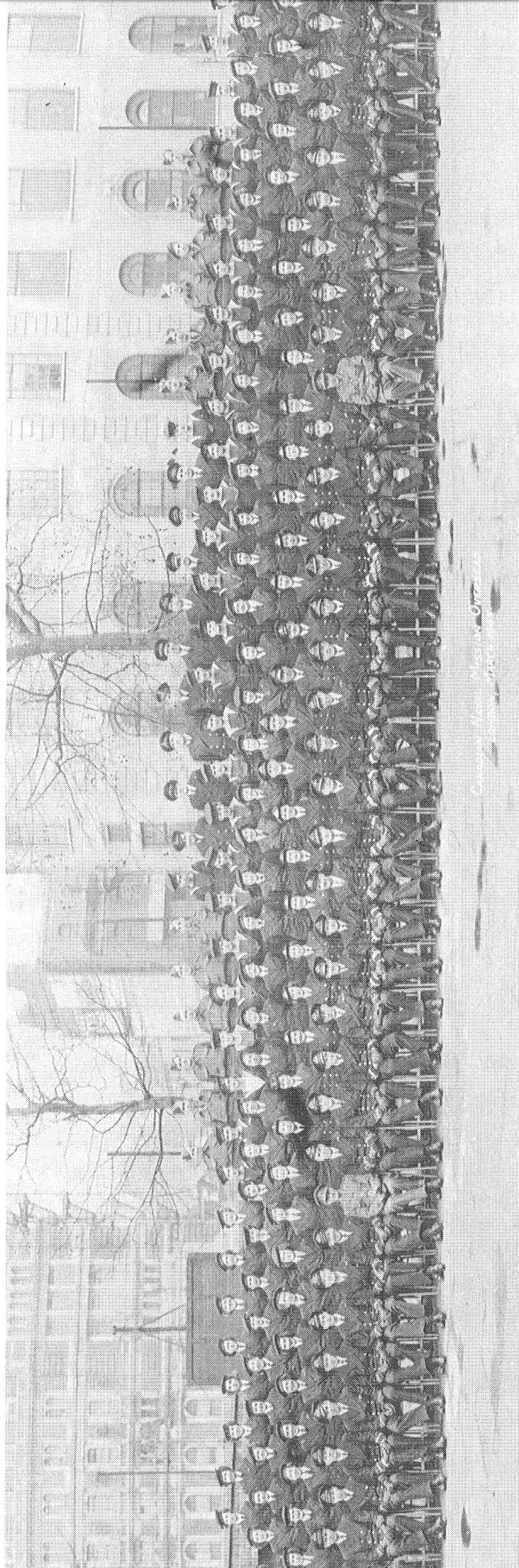


CANADIAN NAVAL MISSION OVERSEAS

London, March 1945

While the Canadian naval delegation to London totalled about a dozen at the beginning of 1940, there are over two hundred in this photograph in which the senior officer, Capt. Frank L. Houghton, RCN, can be seen seated just above the word "MISSION" of the caption.

P.S. Behind him in the distant background is a tall leafless tree which almost begs for the picture to be titled "Giant Oaks From Little Acorns Grow".



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C.N.M.O. STAFF PICTURE

<u>1st Row</u>	<u>2nd Row</u>	<u>3rd Row</u>	<u>4th Row</u>
1. Capt. Rowe	Mary. Marshall	Isabel Thompson	Helen Henderson
2. Pdr. P. yke	Marjorie Maywall	Josce Cain	Dona Tudor
3. Lieut. Patton	Flora Gibbs	Marj. Burns	Jenny Whitehead
4. Lieut. Richardson	Phyllis Wright	Ann Smith	Phil Andrews
5. Lieut. Day	Vi Pearson	Helen Hall	Ruth Whitehead
6. Lieut. Fry	Olivia Fieldt	Kay Connolly	Kay Baker
7. Lieut. Birble	Dorothy Boer	Mary Walker	Rheta Green
8. Lieut. Davis	Vern Shelton	Isabel Whitehead	Doreen Davis
9. Lt. Odr. Smith	Ellean Ford	Betty Green	Ken Thompson
10. Lt. Odr. Simmons	Marion Macdonald	Kay Pilbeam	Bill Hinchelwood
11. Major Webster	Barbara Laurie	Hazel Boyce	Scotty Longthorpe
12. Lt. Odr. Cooper	Macll Keefe	Edna Russell	
13. Lt. Odr. Gilhooly	Alison Martin	Barbel Barry	Bill Griffin
14. Lt. Odr. Sealey	Jean Davidson	Mavis Griffin	Harvel Laferrira
15. Lt. Odr. Gibbs	Dorothy Hill	Ola Riggs	Les. Olen
16. Lt. Odr. Pope	Lieut. Kiddle	Dorothy Morgan	Charles Perry
17. Lt. Odr. Cleveland	Lieut. Woods	Kay Dickinson	Kirk
18. Lt. Odr. Turnbull	Lieut. Greenham	Betty Whitehead	Roy
19. Cdr. Hesthale	Lieut. Burdley	Ruby Carion	Henrie White
20. Cdr. Hill	Sub. Lt. Spinkster	Peggy Marshall	Les Lyon
21. Cdr. E. Smith	Lieut. Oates	Shella Fleming	Geo. Campbell
22. Cdr. Pressey	Lt. Odr. Macaulay	Pat Martyn	Ellen Hoan
23. Capt. Houghton	Lieut. Leon Shaw	Hilda Carter	Bill Olson
24. Surg. Capt. Anderson	Lieut. Sullivan	Dorothy Reed	Specknell
25. Capt. Pennington	Mr. Hamilton	Betty Robertson	Al. Daguid
26. Cdr. Sirgeon	Lieut. Lovett	Peggy Jones	John Bertrand
27. Cdr. Todd	S/Lt. MacMillan	Leah Eaton	Jeff Downey
28. Pdr. Foots	Lieut. Carruthers	Stella Norris	Larry Adams
29. Col. Roop	Lieut. Whimsey	Betty Melville	
30. Lt. Cdr. Brown	Lieut. Henson	Ruby Gibbon	Leo Lawrence
31. Lt. Cdr. Hamilton	Lieut. Madgewick	Marj. Sidenius	Jim Mathiney
32. Lt. Odr. Wilcox	Georgina Murray	Jean Griffiths	Butterfield
33. Lt. Odr. Southern	Pat Brown	Molly Prince	J. Iredale
34. Lieut. Wimmer	Helen Booth	Maureen Kirkman	Jack Adams
35. Lt. Odr. Thomson	Kay Rean	Dorothy Albery	Cynthia Llewel

37. Lieut. Stue
38. Lieut. Lemieux
39. Lieut. Greening
40. Lieut. Mott
41. Lieut. Kellett
42. W.O. Agnew
43. Lieut. Clark
44. Lieut. Carter
45. Lieut. Beveridge.
46. Capt. Long.

- Donna Adams
- Harry Davies
- Herion Phillips
- Evelyn Kerr
- Eva Jay
- Doc Rycroft
- Reuel Cunningham
- Kitty Kelly
- Eve Milne
- Barj. Warren
- Ellen Cameron
- Elizabeth Fells
- Eleanor Thornton.

- Dot Christie
- Chris Blair
- Wrg. Swinson
- Aubrey Carter.

- Mal Baldwin
- Rheta Clements
- Barj. Ryper
- Norma Moffat
- Jane Delanger
- Kenna Montgomery
- Evelyn Hanson
- Isobel Pollock
- Lois Brown

5th Row

1. Sorvage
2. Pearson
3. Hetherston
4. Ruthie
5. Shipman
6. Clayton

5th Row

7. Harold Groom
8. Ralph Harris
9. Malcom MacDonald
10. Dave Adair
11. Len Walsh
12. Lloyd Otto

5th Row

13. Dick Cager
14. Home
15. Carruthers
16. Bruce Owens
17. Ken Wallace
18. Red Pollock

5th Row

19. Durbidge.
20. Pat Hobson
21. Ralph Uttley
22. Sgt. Glenn
23. McIntosh.

Source:

This list of names accompanied the March 1945
CNMO Staff picture which, together with a large
number of other documents, was donated to the
National Archives of Canada in mid-1992 by the
Vancouver Branch of the WRCNS

"W" moved from HMS Mastodon in order to make accommodation available to operational LCI(L) flotilla crews and staff.

Personnel. After injuring his shoulder while training and "found unfit for Beach Commandos" on Apr. 27,¹⁴⁰ Lt.(n) Macbeth (ABM in W-3) re-entered General Service. Ten days later he reported to Liverpool for a tactical course and subsequently joined the frigate HMCS Trentonian as navigating officer.¹⁴¹ By May 20 his ABM W-3 position was filled by Lt. J.B. Cronin, RCNVR, who had been 1st Lieutenant in LCI(L) #250.¹⁴²

Meantime a significant change in the chain of command within each Beach Commando was taking place as a result of Admiralty's Mar. 29 decision to appoint the D/PBM as Commanding Officer (C.O.) with the rank of Acting/Lt. Cdr. and retaining the PBM as overall senior officer.¹⁴³ The authorities apparently felt that such an arrangement would enable the PBM to work more effectively with the Army Beach Group commander and the D/PBM with his Beach Commando. In recommending his D/PBM (Lt. Johnstone) for the C.O. position on Apr. 18, the PBM states:¹⁴⁴

This officer has carried out his duties as my Executive Officer entirely to my satisfaction and under circumstances that were not always easy. Tact and cheerfulness have been necessary at all times as our position has not always been understood by the RN with whom we have come in contact. He is well liked by his fellow officers and keen to keep up the morale and discipline of the commando.

Then he adds: Professional ability -- 7; Personal qualities -- 7; Leadership -- 6; Intellectual ability -- 7; Administrative ability -- 7. Not until Jun. 6 (D-Day), however, did CNMO inform PBM "W" that "effective June 1st Lt. R.J. Johnstone is appointed Deputy [Principal] Beach

Master and Commanding Officer with Acting rank of Lieutenant-Commander."¹⁴⁵

Stores and equipment. For three months after leaving HMS Armadillo in mid-February, "W" continuously faced the problem of securing training and operational stores and equipment. The May 20 monthly report indicates somewhat of an improvement in the situation:

Much of the time spent at HMS "Lizard" has been devoted to the assembling and servicing of Beach Equipment and Operational Gear, (little Training Gear has been obtained thus far). The largest part of the Operational Gear was brought from HMS "Monk" [sic] by railway under the charge of the Stores Officer, Lt. Bentley. It has been augmented by a smaller stock secured through local channels. All of it is stored at a point some distance from HMS "Lizard", but within normal range of routine transport. Thus it has been possible for a party to work daily on the sorting and fitting of Operational Stores.¹⁴⁶

With respect to these variously obtained materials, the PBM noted in his Aug. 31 report that it had enabled "W"'s Stores party to be "put to work to get them in shape for [an] assault landing" and that the party had "made an excellent job of it."¹⁴⁷ Beach drills were subsequently started and the men trained to handle their equipment.¹⁴⁸

Regarding the whole matter of equipment, the PBM pleaded with SCNO(L) in mid-April for some form of local transportation:

Although we have had every co-operation, both at "Mastodon" and at "Lizard", in the matter of transport, the strain to which this Service is generally put precludes the use of base vehicles for any but the most important tasks. Thus we are frequently prevented making business visits on schedule. For this reason we also find it extremely difficult to "liaise" with the Army. A jeep, such as other Beach Commando Units possess, would help tremendously.¹⁴⁹

Reaction to this request appears in the following comment of the Commando's May 20 monthly report: "The loaned jeep has proven extremely useful, especially for short trips

which come up unexpectedly. Heavier transport and transport of a routine nature is still supplied by H.M.S. "Lizard".¹⁵⁰

"W" Commando's role. Further to the whole question of the Canadian Beach Commando's attachment to Force J already discussed (vide supra, pp.28 & 33), SO(CO) provides a relevant chronological account of his activities in an Apr. 19 memorandum-to-file:¹⁵¹

April 14. Capt. Hubback, RN, (Chief of Staff to Commodore Force "J") stated: "J" possesses two assault Commandos plus a reserve Commando attached to GJ3; thus "W" was surplus and, while it may be needed for subsequent or diversionary assault, there was no opportunity to use it at the outset or to include it in any of the exercises -- all major exercises had in fact been completed. For this reason, when the two weeks or so with the Canadian Army was completed, it was proposed to return the Commando to Armadillo for further training. I told him this was not satisfactory and in my opinion such a move would have a most harmful effect on the personnel and, in addition, they would not be obtaining the necessary experience. He expressed complete willingness to consider my proposed alternatives.

April 17. Lt. Cdr. Juniper, RN, (on ANCXF Staff) frankly admits that:

1. "W" was away down on the list of reserve Commandos;
2. "W" had been attached to "J" because they felt (and still feel) "J" will ultimately need a fourth Commando;
3. "J" had ignored "W" and had failed to include it in any of the assault exercises;
4. "J" had in fact proposed discharging the Commando from Force "J".

I told him that Armadillo was an unsatisfactory base in which to keep "W" and, besides, there wasn't room then to accommodate it there. Juniper put the matter to his Senior Officer, Capt. Mansur, RN, who said that if "W" were unavailable it would be necessary to give "J" a fourth Commando in place of "W". Mansur agreed to consult Rear-Admiral Creasey, RN, Chief of Staff to ANCXF.

April 18. Regarding the suggestion to send "W" to Armadillo, I explained to Lt. Carter, RN, (of DCOP, Admiralty) that we could probably arrange to keep "W" training with the Canadian Army for about four weeks, after which we might be contacting him again to see if "W" could be given some Beach Recovery Unit training. Meanwhile, Carter will let me know of any further developments at his end.

In advising SCNO(L) on Apr. 12 that "W" was being looked upon as a "spare" Beach Commando by Force J, SO(CO) recommended that "W" not be so informed.²⁹⁶ As part of Report No.17 enclosed in his Top Secret Apr. 22 memorandum to NHSQ indicating the steadily growing pressure due to "rapidly-developing invasion plans", SCNO(L) wrote:

Last week I paid a visit to Brighton where I inspected R.C.N. Beach Commando "W". Lt. Cdr. O'Hagan, G.M., RCNVR has done a good job with his party, and the officers and men appear fit and ready to go. It is unfortunate that, due to the late formation of this Commando, they have been allocated as a "spare unit". I am negotiating with the Admiralty for a more prominent job for them, and have even gone so far to say that unless this can be done it might be preferable to disband them, since it would be most unfair - as well as uneconomical - to work them up to a high pitch of readiness for action and then leave them behind. I anticipate being able to induce A.N.C.X.F. to give them a fair share in the operation.¹⁵²

SCNO(L) may indeed have had some influence because on Apr. 22 ANCXF sent a succinct directive to Force J:¹⁵³

WRN [sic] Beach Party to remain under your orders and receive all training possible making use of exercise GREENGAGE. This unit will be held in immediate reserve.

A few days afterwards and with reference to "your 26 April", ANCXF advised Force G that:¹⁵⁴

"W" which is favourably reported on by Commodore Force J is to replace "Q" Beach Commando. Arrangement for transfer should be made direct with Commodore Force J.

This would seem somewhat contradictory to SCNO(L)'s May 2 signal to NSHQ stating that the date and details of "W" joining Force G are "to be reported".¹⁵⁵ But all is straightened out when, on May 16, CNMO requests NSHQ to cancel the SCNO(L) signal because there had been a lack of opportunity for joint working up between Force G and "W".¹⁵⁶

To conclude this section, herewith is the essence of SO(CO)'s Apr. 26 message to Capt.

C.D. Maud, RN (Senior Training Officer, Force J):¹⁵⁷

1. Your courtesy in discussing the RCN "W" Commando with Lt. Cdr. O'Hagan and me yesterday is much appreciated.
2. I do not know whether you are aware that it was not Canada's desire to furnish a Beach Party, but it was done at the earnest request of the Admiralty, stipulating that the Party must be kept together and come under RCN administration. The Admiralty's request has resulted in the activities of the Commando being followed at Ottawa with keen interest.

Training.

Meanwhile during April and May "W" personnel were taking various courses at Canadian Army Training Schools (CATSs -- also known as CTSs or CTCs) and Canadian Army Reinforcement Units (CARUs) located in southern England:

1. Anti-gas. At #6 CTC Lt. Shales and seventy ratings received a week's instruction in gas and chemical warfare protection and procedures.¹⁵⁸
2. Battle Tactics. At #5 CTS Lts. Crowhurst, Finley, and Sutherland took two weeks and Lts. Angus and Shales, as well as some seventy ratings, took one week of infantry battle and street fighting instruction.¹⁵⁹ During this fortnight period, the bulk of the Commando bivouacked nearby under canvas.¹⁶⁰
3. Vehicle Handling. At #2 CARU (Huron Barracks at Bramshott) Lts. Crowhurst, Finley, and Sutherland, together with thirteen ratings, and at #3 CARU (Dettingen Barracks at Deep Cut) Lts. Angus, Hatch, Rayburn, and Shales, along with thirty-five ratings, were given the six-day 2/Drivers 1C/1/3 (M.T.1.) course in which they learned how to operate such types of vehicle as motorcycle, jeep, staff car, station wagon, tracked (bren-gun) carrier, 15-cwt. and 60 cwt. trucks.¹⁵⁹
4. Mine Detection and Disposal. One officer and ten ratings completed two weeks instruction before "W" departed from HMS Mastodon at the beginning of April.¹⁶¹

With respect to "Battle Tactics", the PBM sent an invitation on May 1 to SO(CO):¹⁶²

[1]. I Enclose herewith a rough draft of the training programme for this week at No.5 Training School. The most interesting event will be the "Battle Course ('Wet') on Friday morning should Admiral Nelles or others of the London Staff wish to get down for it.

2. Thanks for the help with Capt. Maud, RN.

The enclosure outlined the week's schedule:

<u>Monday:</u>	P.T., Signals, Obstacle Course, Route March
<u>Tuesday:</u>	P.T., Review Gas, Signals, Assault Course Dry
<u>Wednesday:</u>	P.T., Signals, Obstacle Course, Range, Route March
<u>Thursday:</u>	P.T., Obstacle Course, Route March, Signals
<u>Friday:</u>	Battle Course Wet

SO(CO) subsequently told the PBM that such a visit, at least for Nelles, was "impossible".

On May 16 the PBM wrote two memos about "Vehicle Handling". In the one to SCNO(L) he began by saying that the fifty-five "W" personnel who completed the course had found "all the officers and instructors ... extremely helpful" and then asked that a letter of thanks be sent to CMHQ.¹⁶³ In the other to SO(CO), he wrote:¹⁶⁴

Dear Brookes [sic]. Request that you will have a letter written to Lt. Col. Arrenson, the Commanding Officer of No.6 C.T.S., to thank him for the great help he has given us in training the Commando. I have thanked him with wine and song, but if you could make it official [we] would appreciate it. Yours truly.

On the following day SO(CO) composed a draft for Vice-Admiral Nelles' signature. Addressed to Arrenson personally, c/o CMHQ (London), the letter first refers to the PBM's recent report which mentioned the "very great assistance which you have rendered in connection with the development of the Commando recently" and then concludes: "May I take this opportunity of expressing to you my appreciation for your co-operation. Yours truly."¹⁶⁵ Referring to their May 2 / May 4 exchange of correspondence on the desirability

and setting up of vehicle handling instruction, CNMO signalled CMHQ as follows on May 26: "PBM reports driver refresher course was most helpful, and it is desired to so express Mission's appreciation on record."¹⁶⁶ Finally we might note here that in his August 31 report the PBM stated that the vehicle handling course proved to have been "extremely useful".¹⁶⁷

In Paragraph #6 of his twelve-paragraph comprehensive minute of April 12 to SCNO(L) about "W", SO(CO) implicitly praises the PBM for being successful in making the necessary arrangements with the Canadian Army for "W" to take these several training courses; and, in Paragraph #7, he pleads for the PBM to be congratulated for such initiatives.¹⁶⁸

Two other ways of preparing "W" personnel during these months are mentioned in official records:

1. Five officers "had brief lectures and a practical test in the use of the Davis Diving Helmet."¹⁶⁹
2. SCNO(L) requested the Canadian LCI(L) squadron to assist "W" "in obtaining use of gunnery and other facilities required to extent possible."¹⁷⁰

Meanwhile, in relation to another vital aspect of "W"'s efficacy as an operational commando, the April 20 monthly report declares:¹⁷³

Of the equipment specified for use of Beach Parties in Combined Operations Pamphlet 17, only Beach Lights and signs have been delivered. Because of the lack of gear it has been necessary in some cases to demand locally or to borrow from whatever source we could in order to make up the deficit.

Before concluding Section 5, a brief account will be given concerning "W"'s complement of Petty Officers (POs) and Leading Seamen (L/S). Ever since being initially staffed with two POs and five L/S, the Commando had experienced difficulty in securing the authorized number of six for each category.¹⁷¹ It will be recalled (vide supra, p.25) that back in December 1943 all the "W" ABs who took the Combined Operations Leading Seaman course

in HMS Armadillo had failed the examination. On Mar. 19, 1944, HMCS Niobe recommended to NSHQ that approval be given to the PBM's request for permission to promote ratings from within the Commando where possible.¹⁷² "On arriving at [HMS] Lizard," the PBM noted in his April 20 monthly report,

it was decided to avail ourselves of the Training Staff facilities here with a view toward earmarking potential Leading Seamen, at the same time giving all ratings a "brushing up" in seamanship, gunnery, signals, etc. Two weeks of this training has been completed.¹⁷³

HMCS Niobe was subsequently advised on May 12 that after taking a three-week course, "all ten" ABs passed the Leading Seaman exam and one L/S qualified as PO.¹⁷⁴ Ten days later SO(CO) asked NAPERS to grant if possible "W"'s May 17 (WLO 11) request to advance ratings from within.¹⁷⁵

In any event, when the Commando landed in Normandy at the end of the first week of July, by which time authorization had been given for six POs and eight L/S, "W"'s Nominal List showed one PO, three Acting POs and nine Acting L/S.¹⁷⁶

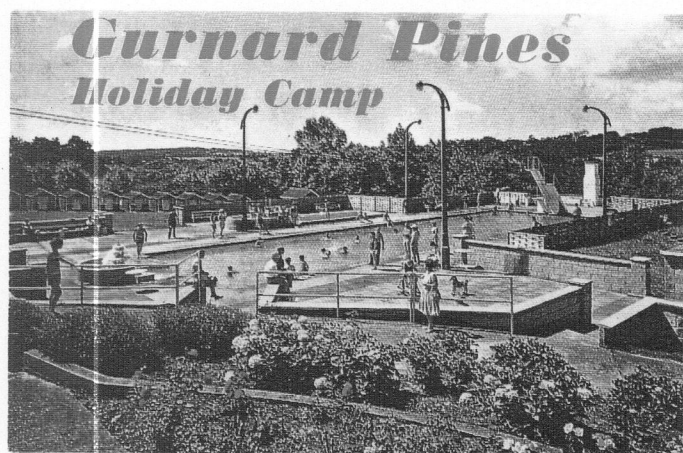
Concerning "W"'s two-month stay in and around HMS Lizard, the London-based RCN History Section made these comments at the end of 1944:¹⁷⁷

From there courses with Canadian Army Battle Schools were arranged but no complete training or assault work was possible since full beach equipment had not arrived and a beach signals section had yet to be allocated to the Commando. This was because the Commando was not slated for the assault but was a spare for Force "J". There were, in fact, more trained Beach Commandos ready for the invasion than there were assault beaches.

On May 28 "W" personnel, equipment, and stores moved from HMS Lizard to HMS Vectis (Pines Camp) on the Isle of Wight.¹⁷⁸ Under the heading of Change of Address in the Commando's June 19 monthly report, we read: "Six 3-ton lorries and two single-deck buses were used in travelling from Hove to Southampton, when the gear had to be transferred to Ferry for transport to Cowes."¹⁷⁹

HMS *VECTIS (PINES CAMP)
Cowes, Isle of Wight

*Vectis was name given by the Romans to the Isle of Wight



These premises, situated on a well-wooded, sixty-acre site and operated in peace-time as Gurnard Pines Holiday Camp, were demolished during the 1970s preparatory to a housing development.

Section 6

HMS Vectis (Pines Camp) -- May 28 to July 7, 1944

Personnel. In the process of moving to HMS Vectis, "W" received orders for Lt. Hatch (W-3 BM) to report on May 29 to CNMO from where he was appointed shortly afterwards to Canadian MTB #460.¹⁸⁰ Lt. Angus, as "senior A.B.M. of W-3 and its most devoted mentor", became W-3 BM, being replaced as W-3 ABM by Lt. J. Vaillancourt, RCNVR, who left Canadian MTB #743.¹⁸¹

Upon request towards the end of June, Lt. J.R. Cunningham, RCNVR, left the convoy escort service and replaced Lt. Shales (W-2 ABM) who was hospitalized as a result of breaking both heels.¹⁸² Although Shales never rejoined "W", he eventually returned to General Service as Asdic Officer in a Canadian frigate. After being only ten days with the Commando, Cunningham received appointment as spare officer with the 29th Canadian MTB flotilla. To fill the vacant W-2 ABM position, Lt. C.B. Christie arrived on July 6, the very day that RCN Beach Commando "W" was embarking for passage to the Normandy beaches.¹⁸³

Within "W"'s three respective Beach Parties, certain personnel changes among the ratings occurred during this period.¹⁸⁴

W-1. PO G. Winn left by request (partly his and partly ours).

AB J. Skinner was forced to leave on account of illness.

Replacements, ABs H. Murray and N. Knight, came from HMCS Niobe via HMS Armadillo.

W-2. AB W.A. Burden, who "climaxed a long and unhappily eventful career with a discharge to NIOBE", was replaced by AB E. Woodall.

W-3. AB M. Fleming replaced "assault course casualty" OD F. Gamblin.¹⁸⁵

AB H. Byers left "upon the granting of his request to go back to Landing Craft" and was replaced by AB D. Murphy.

Under the heading of New Rates, the June 19 monthly report gives further information about various "W" ratings:¹⁸⁶

On top of the vacancies for higher rates already existing, two more were created during the month, by reversion to general service of PO G. Winn and by the disrating of A/L.S. G. Madden. The disrating of G. Madden followed his appearance as a Defaulter before the Maintenance Captain, H.M.S. Vectis. To bring the complement up to strength, the following were created Acting Leading Seamen (Comb. Ops.) to date May 12, 1944: Able Seamen D. Smiley, J. Playtouw, J. Joyce, J. Forsyth, W. Murphy, D. Warren, J. Adams, E. Jackson and R. Hay.

Another personnel change affecting "W" around this time concerns SO(CO) who, in the person of A/Lt. Cdr. W.S. Brooke, was appointed in the summer of 1943 to serve under SCNO(L). Since then he had played a major role with respect to the RCN's participation in Combined Operations under the Royal Navy -- mainly as it relates to Beach Commando "W" and LCI(L)s. On Jun. 29, 1944, he wrote to Vice-Admiral Nelles (Head, CNMO) requesting his "resignation as a temporary officer in the RCNVR may be effective at any early date."¹⁸⁷ Noting first that because of his *age his service had been largely ashore "and very disappointing in that duties assigned were seldom important and at no time kept me fully occupied", he then comments:¹⁸⁸

*Brooke was born in 1902.

In common with many others, I willingly gave up the prospects which I had earned by twenty years hard work in business, and I now face the task of endeavouring to salvage some small portion of those prospects -- a task increasingly difficult as each day passes.

As a result of being intensively preoccupied with the three Canadian LCI(L) flotillas immediately prior to and during the recent Normandy invasion, he first admits that "the strain of the period persists" and then adds: "For the better part of the past year, the long hours every day for seven days a week with no leave has been most wearying."¹⁸⁹ In the margin of the letter and dated Jun. 30, NAPERS Captain wrote: "... has made and can continue to make valuable contribution. His main trouble is that he can not, or will not, relax. A change of appointment might help."¹⁹⁰

In a draft memorandum to NSHQ composed about Jul. 1, CNMO begins by recommending acceptance of the resignation request, then notes the "marked success" achieved by Brooke as Staff Officer (Combined Operations) under SCNO(L), for which he had thrice been recommended for confirmation of lieutenant-commander rank and increased seniority, and concludes by pointing out that, with the imminent disbandment of the LCI(L) flotillas and Beach Party, the necessity for the SO(CO) position would lapse.¹⁹¹ Accordingly, on Aug. 30, when the two Combined Operations units were officially "paid off", Nelles accepted Brooke's request "with regret".¹⁹² At the time of advising NSHQ a month later that its Combined Operations section was being discontinued as of Sept. 30, CNMO also announced:¹⁹³

Lt/Cdr Brooke is appointed Niobe add'l for passage to Canada to date 6 Oct and Stadacona add'l for leave and disposal DTBR. This officer has been ordered to report NSHQ on arrival in Canada.

Training. A picked team consisting of Lts. Cronin and Shales and twelve ratings (four each from W-1, W-2, and W-3 respectively) made an "excellent showing" at a two-week sniping and scouting course which they completed in early June at #1 CTS.¹⁹⁴

Lts. Finley, Hampson, and Vaillancourt, together with about two dozen ratings, returned to HMS Vectis from HMS Volcano (located near Seascales, Cumberland) on Jun. 20 after ten days instruction dealing with mines, booby traps, and beach obstacles.¹⁹⁵

Apart from such specialized courses taken at various locations on the mainland, "local training" around HMS Vectis on the Isle of Wight consisted principally of beach drill, pistol and rifle shooting, and PT.¹⁹⁶ On May 25 Com Force J approved "W"'s request to bivouac and carry out landing craft beach drills for a week on Bracklesham Beach commencing May 28.¹⁹⁷

According to "W"'s June 19 monthly report:¹⁹⁸

... participation in a small exercise on June 1st was arranged through Cdr. Prior, RN, Senior Training Officer, Force 'J'. It is expected that other larger exercises will be forthcoming shortly, especially since the attachment to us on June 13th, of No. 1 RN Beach Signal Section.

The only additional Exercise (and in fact the last of any kind for "W") took place on Jun. 30 when the Commando utilized four assault landing craft carried by LSI(M) HMCS Prince Robert in order to practice beach landing and leaving procedures.¹⁹⁹

Beach Signals Section. As already mentioned (vide supra, p.2), the organizational structure within Combined Operations provided for the attachment to each Beach Commando of a Beach Signals Section consisting of two signal officers and twenty-eight ratings (including one Yeoman of Signals, one PO telegraphist, and seven Leading ratings).²⁰⁰

RN Beach Signals Sections were normally trained near Troon in Scotland (HMS Dundonald II) and one would only join up with a Beach Commando when the latter was about to take part in an Operation or (occasionally) an Exercise.²⁰¹

Perhaps the earliest official reference to "W" having an attached Beach Signal Unit appears as part of the British First Sea Lord's Proposal #4 made on Aug. 31, 1943, at the special Cabinet War Committee meeting in Quebec City (vide supra, p.5). With the Committee's approval of Proposal #4 in its entirety at their Sept. 8 meeting, it could be presumed that an RCN Beach Signals Section would be duly established and staffed.

The issue is then referred to in two particular paragraphs of a Sept. 24 memorandum from Assistant Chief of Naval Personnel to DOOP. Paragraph #3 reveals that NSHQ was contemplating the use of personnel on "RN loan" to Combined Operations to staff required positions for signalmen, telegraphists, and one complete Beach Signal Unit.²⁰² Paragraph #8 recommends appointing ratings who have "some knowledge of signals" and who, "if possible, failed the Signals Course at St. Hyacinthe."²⁰³

More than six months elapsed before the next relevant reference occurs. While still based in HMS Lizard, PBM "W" replied as follows on Apr. 19, 1944, to SCNO(L)'s letter written a week before.²⁰⁴

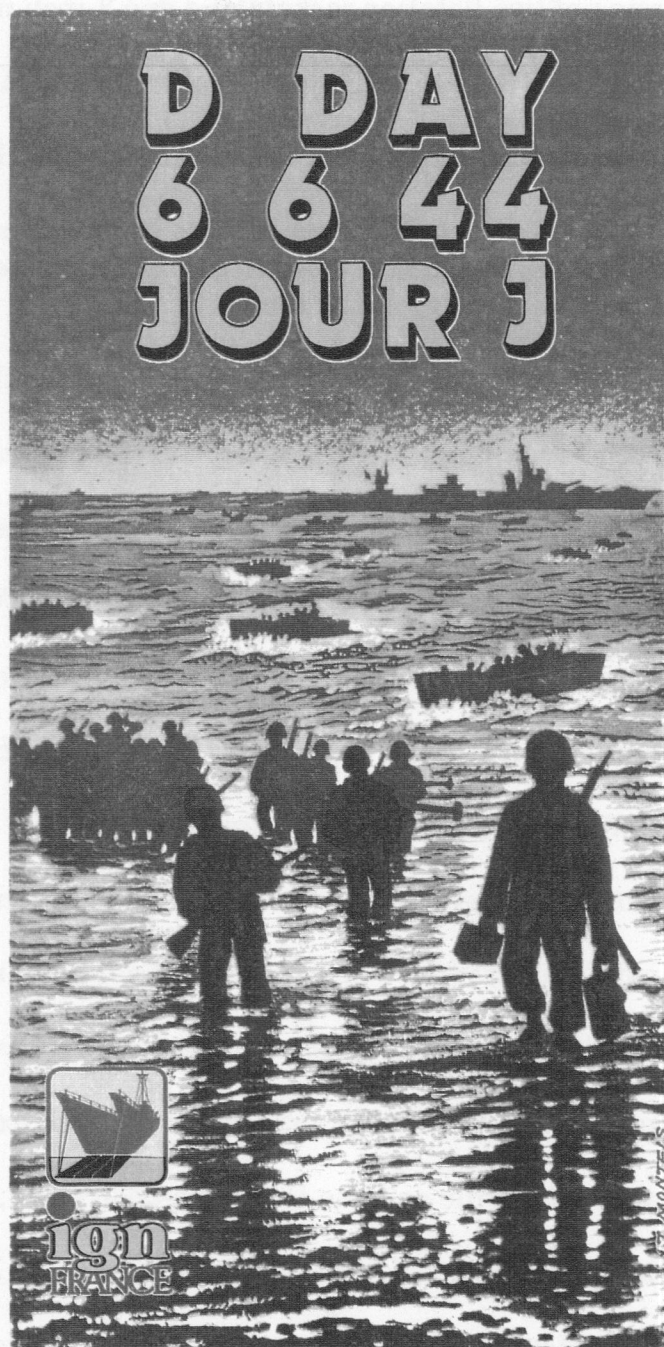
It is submitted that if there is time available for the training of Officers and Ratings, it would be of great assistance to appoint a Canadian Beach Signal Section to "W" Commando. So far we have not had Signals attached to us, but in an operation we would have to rely to a great extent upon them, and a Canadian unit trained with this Commando would be likely to increase efficiency.

On May 27, Com Force J informed ANCXF that although none had yet been allocated to "W", a Canadian Beach Signal unit was then available in Canada. "If so," J's message concluded, "request this be called forward ASA convenient."²⁰⁵ Two days later CNMO advised Com Force J that, in fact, no such naval unit existed in Canada.²⁰⁶ Finally on Jun. 13, a week after D-Day, RN Beach Signals Section No. 1 joined RCN Beach Commando "W".²⁰⁷

Stores and equipment. With respect to transport, SO(CO) noted that "W"'s jeep, having been condemned by REME, had been turned in and replaced on Jun. 8.²⁰⁸ "It is expected," SO(CO) announced a week later after consulting NAPERS, "that the Commando will shortly commence taking delivery of the operational vehicles."²⁰⁹ On Jun. 20 CNMO informed C.O. "W" that the six cars allocated to the Beach Commando were numbered consecutively from RCN 45 to RCN 50.²¹⁰

Two other items obtained at this time warrant mention:

1. In response to CNMO's May 30 request, CMHQ authorized the release on Jun. 5 of three bren guns and associated stores to "W" for operational use.²¹¹



NORMANDY BEACHES
JUNE 6 1944

2. On Jun. 9 CNMO asked "W" to pick up Canadian Army Flotation Gear (consisting of two flotation jackets and one 3-inch mortar box) at Aldershot and carry out trials to judge its effectiveness.²¹² As advance trials proved "quite successful", on Jun. 20 CNMO signalled NSHQ:²¹³

Request eighteen sets flotation jackets (web equipment) only for early operational use. If available most desirable jackets be despatched by air very early date.

D-Day and afterwards. Operation "Overlord" (code name for the liberation of Western Europe) commenced on the evening of Jun. 5, 1944, when Allied air and naval transports started to leave from their bases in Britain and headed for Normandy where army units, led by paratroopers, would begin landing early the next morning. We are interested only in the part of the naval phase (code-named Operation "Neptune") which involved the disembarkation of troops, armour, guns, equipment, and stores from assorted ships and landing craft on to one of the five designated sector beaches.

For the assault on Normandy beaches between Cherbourg on the west and Le Havre on the east, the Allied Naval Expeditionary Force (ANXF) under Admiral Sir Bertram Ramsay, RN, was split into two Task Forces: the Western under Rear-Admiral A.G. Kirk, USN, was responsible for landings in both Utah and Omaha sectors, which extended some forty miles from west to east between Quinéville and Ste Honorine-des-Pertes; the Eastern Task Force under Rear-Admiral Sir Philip Vian, RN, was responsible for Gold, Juno, and Sword sectors extending about the same distance from Port-en-Bessin to Ouistreham. Utah and Omaha beaches were stormed by Lieutenant-General O.N. Bradley's 1st U.S. Army and Lieutenant-General M.C. Dempsey's 2nd British Army (which included the 3rd Canadian Infantry

Division) went ashore in the three eastern sectors.

Altogether eight RN Beach Commandos took part in the June 6 D-Day Normandy landings: "F" and "R" in Gold sector under Force G; "L", "P", and "S" in Juno sector under Force J; and "J", "Q", and "T" in Sword sector under Force S. Because RCN Beach Commando "W" was attached to Force J, our concern is limited to Juno sector's two beaches -- respectively named "Mike" and "Nan" -- which were located within the ten-mile stretch from Graye-sur-Mer on the west to Langrune-sur-Mer on the east, with Courseulles-sur-Mer and Bernières-sur-Mer situated in between.

In passing it is interesting to note that on Jun. 13 Vice-Admiral Nelles wrote to thank both Rear-Admiral Sir Philip Vian, RN (Commander of the Eastern Naval Task Group) and Commodore G.N. Oliver, RN (Commander Force J) for his visit to Juno beaches the previous day.²¹⁴ Beach Commando "W", meanwhile, waited in the wings, "ready to relieve an assault commando as soon as required."²¹⁵

To CNMO's Jun. 14 request for a Canadian LCI(L) to transport the Canadian Commando to the assault beaches for experience,²¹⁶ ANCXF replied two days afterwards by saying that no LCI(L) could be spared and, besides, "W" was "also required to be available at short notice to move if called for."²¹⁷ Although Com Force J "most strongly recommended" the request in its Jun. 29 signal to C-in-C Portsmouth, the latter's answer on the following day said it "cannot be approved at present, but will be reconsidered at a later date."²¹⁸

By the end of June when it appeared unlikely that "W" would play any part in the Normandy show, the Commando was granted quarterly leave by Maintenance Captain, HMS Vectis.²¹⁹ On the first of July, "W" signalled to CNMO:²²⁰

Officers and men of "W" Commando embarking on 9 days leave commencing July 3rd and 4th. Request correspondence of immediate importance be addressed c/o CNMO[:] remainder as before.

As revealed by RCN MTB #462's "restricted" memo 031340 to CNMO, (R) HMS Hornet (located at Portsmouth), one "W" officer apparently planned on spending at least part of his leave in Normandy: "Intend embarking LT EG FINLEY RCNVR for passage today Monday 3rd July."²²¹ Then on the evening of Jul. 4, less than forty-eight hours after most personnel had dispersed, "W" was alerted (presumably by CNMO) to the contents of Com Force J's Confidential 041652B addressed to C-in-C Portsmouth, viz.:²²²

A.N.C.X.F. has agreed to send "W" RCN Beach Commando by LCI(L) to Juno area for period of experience in beach duties. Request LCI(L) ex[?] RCN Flotilla may collect them at Cowes A.M. Friday 7th July.

SUPREME HEADQUARTERS ALLIED EXPEDITIONARY FORCE

Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen of the Allied Expeditionary Force!

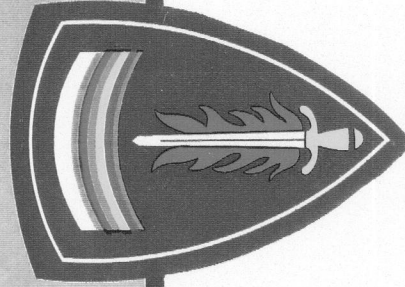
You are about to embark upon the Great Crusade, toward which we have striven these many months. The eyes of the world are upon you. The hopes and prayers of liberty-loving people everywhere march with you. In company with our brave Allies and brothers-in-arms on other Fronts, you will bring about the destruction of the German war machine, the elimination of Nazi tyranny over the oppressed peoples of Europe, and security for ourselves in a free world.

Your task will not be an easy one. Your enemy is well trained, well equipped and battle-hardened. He will fight savagely. But this is the year 1944! Much has happened since the Nazi triumphs of 1940-41. The United Nations have inflicted upon the Germans great defeats, in open battle, man-to-man. Our air offensive has seriously

reduced their strength in the air and their capacity to wage war on the ground. Our Home Fronts have given us an overwhelming superiority in weapons and munitions of war, and placed at our disposal great reserves of trained fighting men. The tide has turned! The free men of the world are marching together to Victory!

I have full confidence in your courage, devotion to duty and skill in battle. We will accept nothing less than full Victory! Good Luck! And let us all beseech the blessing of Almighty God upon this great and noble undertaking.

Dwight D. Eisenhower



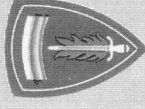
MESSAGE

OF

GENERAL DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER
(SUPREME COMANDER, OPERATION "OVERLORD")
TO HIS TROOPS
ON THE EVE OF THE NORMANDY INVASION

Commandement Suprême

des Forces Expéditionnaires Alliées



Soldats, Marins et Aviateurs des Forces Expéditionnaires Alliées!

Vous êtes sur le point de vous embarquer pour la Grande Croisade vers laquelle ont tendu tous nos efforts pendant de longs mois. Les yeux du monde sont fixés sur vous. Les espoirs, les prières de tous les peuples épris de liberté vous accompagnent. Avec nos valeureux Alliés et nos frères d'armes des autres fronts, vous détruirez la machine de guerre allemande, vous anéantirez le joug de la tyrannie que les Nazis exercent sur les peuples d'Europe et vous apporterez la sécurité dans un monde libre.

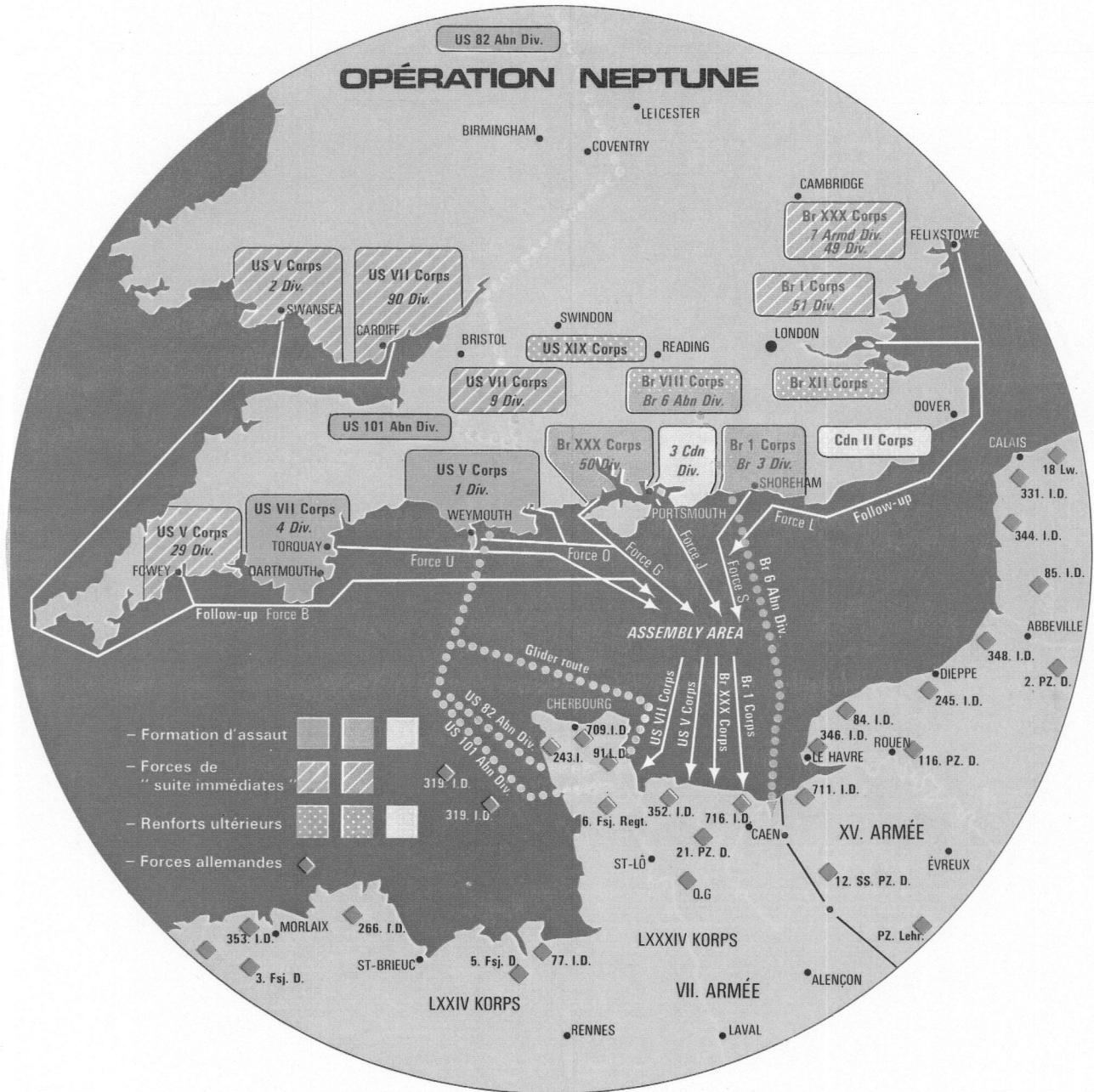
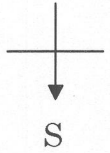
Votre tâche ne sera pas facile. Votre ennemi est bien entraîné, bien équipé et dur au combat. Il luttera sauvagement.

Mais nous sommes en 1944! Beaucoup de choses ont changé depuis le triomphe nazi des années 1940-41. Les Nations-Unies ont infligé de grandes défaites aux Allemands, dans des combats d'homme à homme. Notre offensive aérienne a sérieusement diminué leur capacité à faire la guerre sur terre et dans les airs. Notre effort de guerre nous a donné une supériorité écrasante en armes et munitions, et a mis à notre disposition d'importantes réserves d'hommes bien entraînés. La fortune de la bataille a tourné! Les hommes libres du monde marchent ensemble vers la Victoire!

J'ai totalement confiance en votre courage, votre dévouement et votre compétence dans la bataille. Nous n'accepterons que la Victoire totale! Bonne chance! Implorons la bénédiction du Tout-Puissant sur cette grande et noble entreprise.

Dwight D. Eisenhower

ENGLAND



FRANCE

The following twenty pages of photographs, taken by Lt. Richard Graham ("Bus") Arless, RCNVR, comprise almost the entire portfolio which he shot while on his assignment of covering "W" during its July/August stint on Juno sector of the Normandy beachhead.



A B A. Therien in full assault gear



Awaiting transport --- Cowes, July 7, 1944



*Embarking in *LCI(L) 298, RCN's 1st Flotilla*

**LCI(L) = Landing Craft Infantry (Large)*



All Aboard!



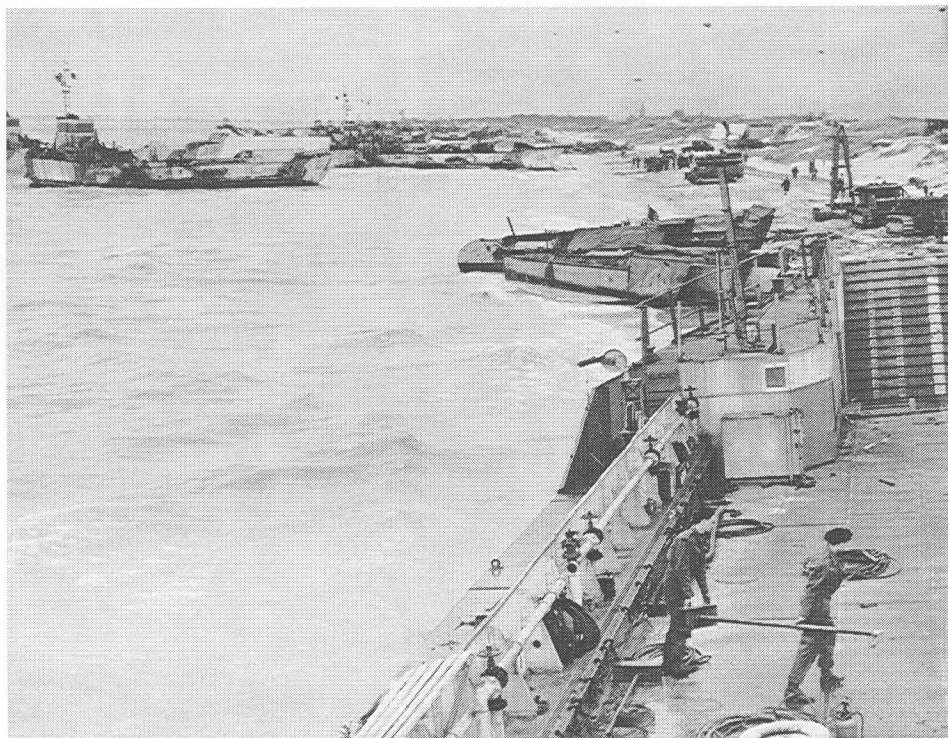
July 8, 1944 - Mike beach, Juno sector, Normandy



Mike beach signal station. Second from left is Lt. Cdr. O'Hagan, PBM of "W"



L/R: Lt. Cdrs. D. O'Hagan & R. Johnstone, ABs D. Kroschewsky & W. Cronkhite, and three other unidentified "W" personnel anxiously gaze seawards.



Stormy weather aftermath



Continuous traffic jam

Giant beach

machines

prevent

**LCT 2484*

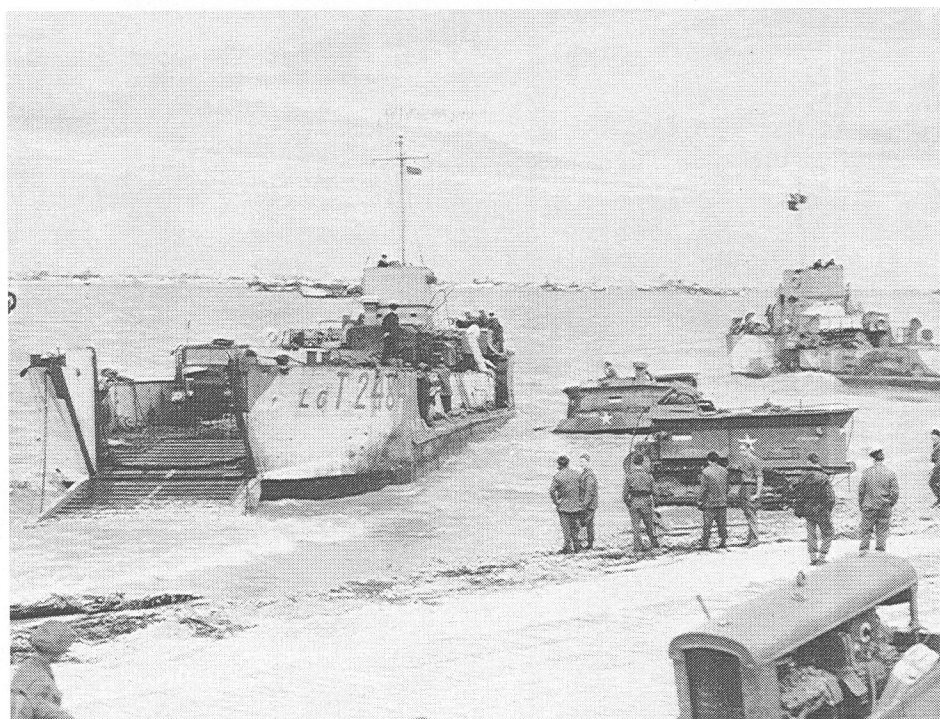
from

broaching

to.



**LCT = Landing Craft Tank*



LCT 2484 beaches safely



*Inbound
LCTs*



*LCT 2232
being
signalled in*

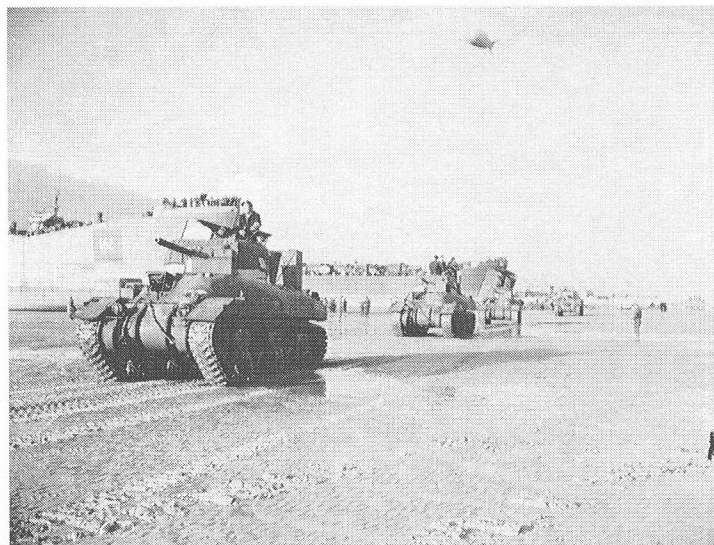


*Off-loading
RCAMC
truck and
personnel*

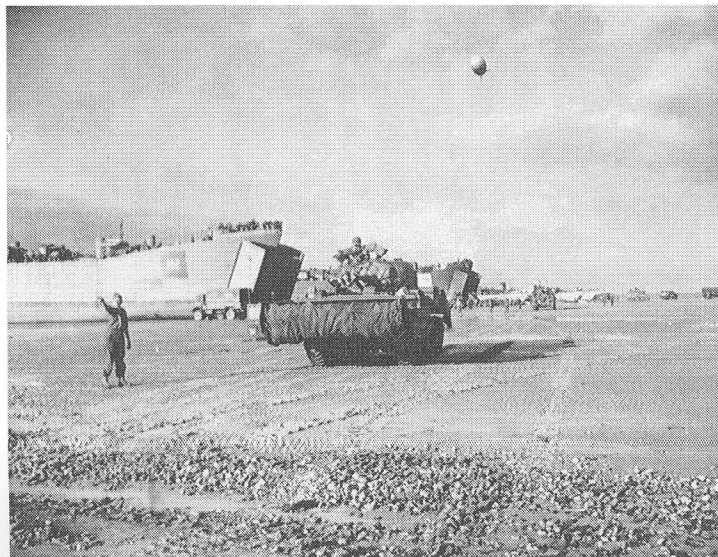




Landing



Ship

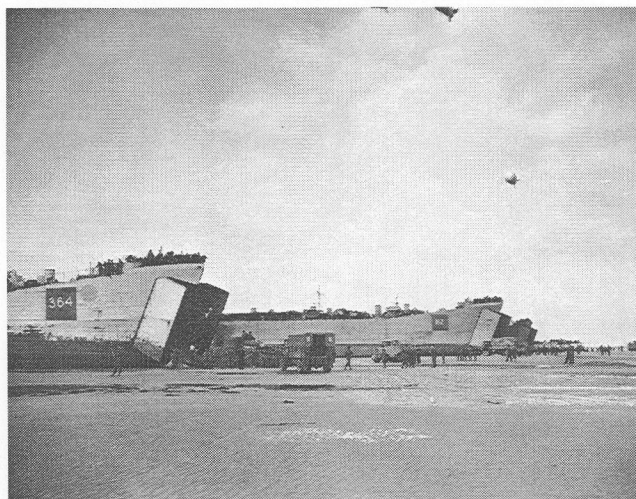


Tanks

As far

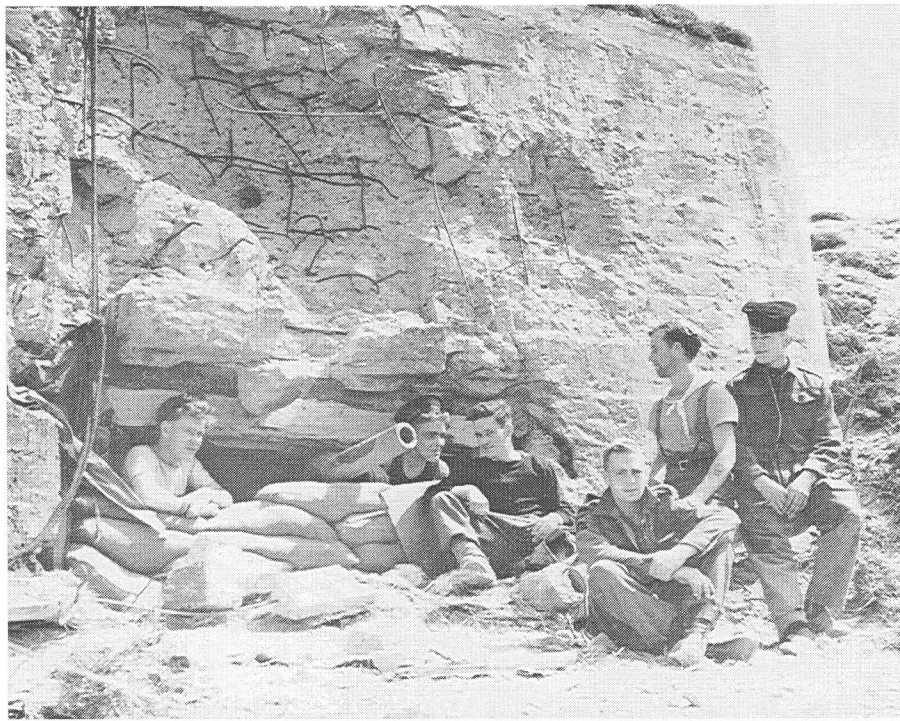


as the eye



can see





W-2 ratings using this former German fort for "digs" are (left to right): J. Ross, A. Petty, J. White, J. Forsyth, W. Murphy, A. Watt



W-2 Beach Party members (left to right) kneeling: A. Watt, D. Kennedy, R. Barnes, E. Woodall, D. Trewin, A. Petty, A. Morris, J. White; standing: W. Murphy, J. Adams, J. Roy, D. McIntyre, D. Rayburn, W. Cronkhite, D. Kroshewsky, J. Ross, R. Nelson



Sleeping and living quarters for (left to right): J. Offless, R. Nelson, D. Smiley (lying on floor), A. Morris (in white jumper), J. Adams (at extreme right)



AB A. Watt slinging his mick



AB G. Vilneff (right) and buddy cover their tent, a flak-downed barrage balloon, with camouflage netting

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*L/R: J. Forsyth, J. Caler, W. Cronkhite,
A. Morris, D. McIntyre, W. Murphy*

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*L/R: A. Petty, D. Murphy, *, *, D. Kroshewsky, J. Adams, D. McIntyre*

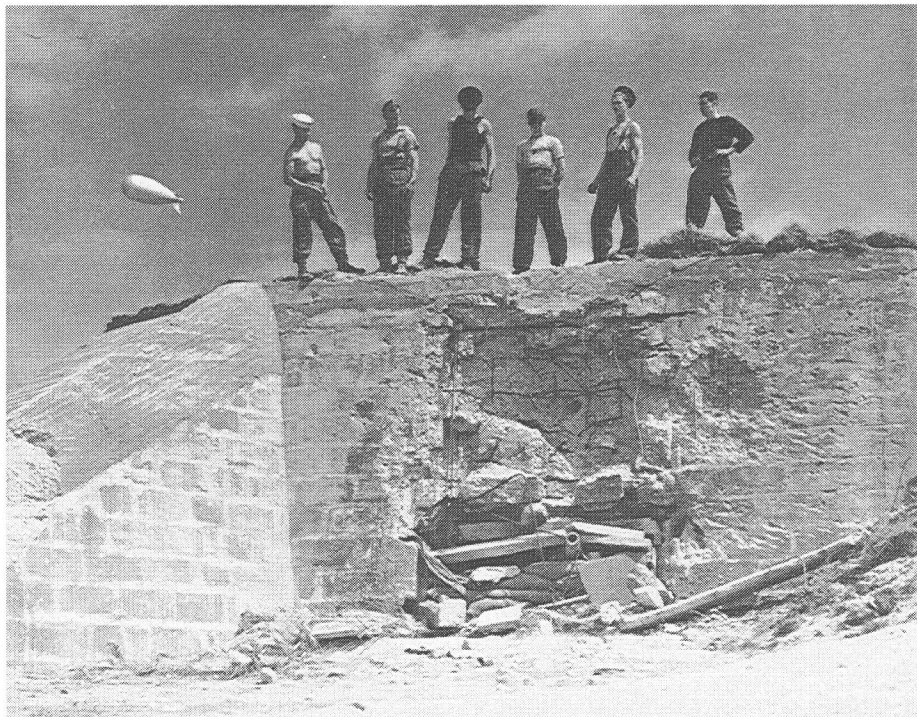
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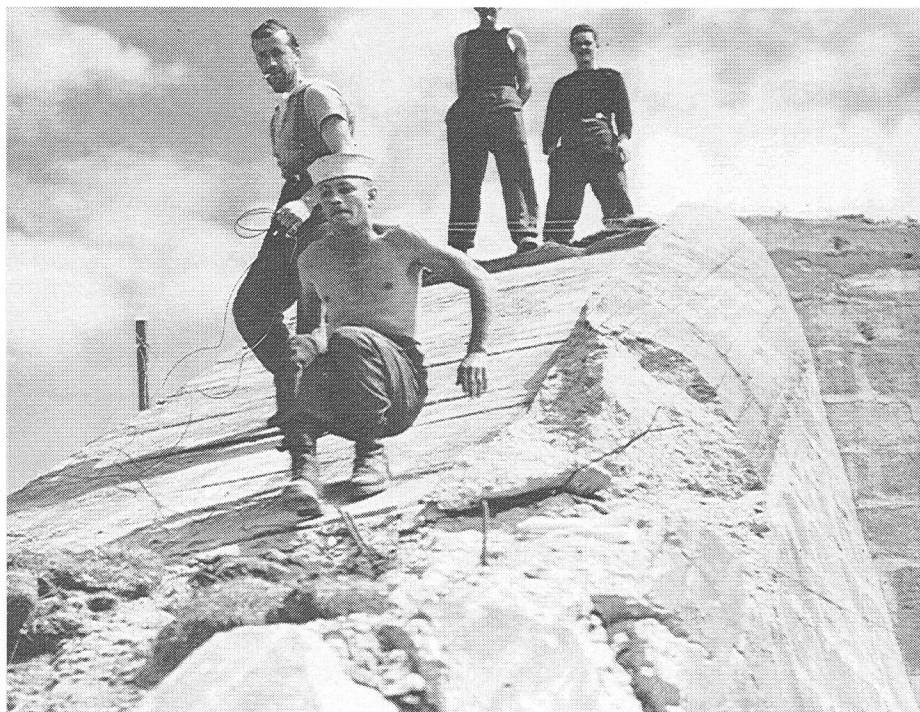
Keeping fit

W-2 Beach Party exercises under PO D. McIntyre





Hey! How do we get down from up here?



Simple. PO D. McIntyre shows steel-shod boots make sliding easy

Of course no recreation program is complete without

BASEBALL



-- an LST for a centrefield fence --

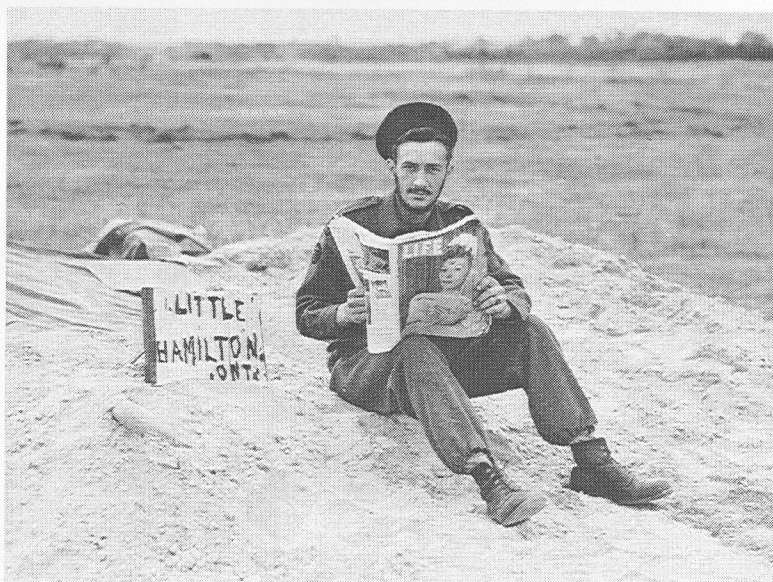


*Checking over their Lewis gun are (left to right):
ABs P. Demontigny, J. Read, and I Watkins.*



AB G. Vilneff writing home

Seated atop his "Little Hamilton" dug-out, AB R. Burse reads Life magazine's Oct. 25, 1943 issue which features Mary Martin on the cover



AB E. Woodall kneels to examine cross marking German soldier's grave



AB D. Trewin rests his hand on a sign erected by the Germans as a warning of hidden mines in the vicinity



ABs W. Cronkhite (left) and A. Morris (right) buy French money from Cpl. S. Johnson, R.C.E.



AB L. Quesnel (right) chats with Prv. M. Belanger (left) and Cpl. P. Jenkins, Régiment de la Chaudière, both just back from the Front.



RCNVR Public Relations officers on assignment with RCN Beach Commando "W" in Normandy (left to right): Lt. Cdrs. G. Lawrence and A. Tate, and Lt. R. G. Arless.

Upon receiving word on the evening of Jul. 4 intimating "W" would be required to embark for France on Jul. 7, D/PBM Johnstone immediately sent out recalls to those on leave.²²³ On Jul. 6 PCO Calshot instructed C-in-C TURCO, (R) ANCXF, as follows: "LCI(L) 298 has been detailed for Cowes at 1100 tomorrow 7th July and not repetition not LCI(L) 301 to embark "W" R.C.N. beach commando."²²⁴ When LCI(L) 298 departed on the afternoon of Jul. *7 from Cowes, seven officers (PBM O'Hagan; D/PBM & C.O. Johnstone; BMs Sutherland, Rayburn, and Angus; ABMs Hampson and Christie) and **fifty-two ratings answered to muster-roll.²²⁷

CNMO's "SECRET" 071736B July, 1944, to HMCS Niobe (INFO NSHQ) reported: "... RCN Commando "W" are now en route to Juno Area for experience.....Duration of stay indefinite."²²⁸ On this same day SO(CO)'s "SECRET" memorandum to NAPERS announced that "Naval Party 1568A" was "W"'s new address in France and personnel still in England would proceed to Normandy in due course.²²⁹ The next morning, Jul. 8 (D+32), "W" disembarked on Juno's "Mike" beach and at noon officially relieved RN Beach Commando "P" which had suffered casualties during and after the initial Jun. 6 (D-Day) assault.²³⁰ While the relieved Commando returned forthwith to UK for leave and regrouping, its PBM (Cdr. R.M. Prior, RN) and one BM remained for twenty-four hours to assist "W" adjust to the situation.²³¹

* Two other official records indicate "W" personnel boarded the LCI(L) p.m. Jul. 6, arrived a.m. Jul. 7, and replaced an RN Beach Commando on Jul. 8.²²⁵

** Two other official records give the number of ratings as forty-eight and fifty-one respectively.²²⁶

George & Tovell describe "W"'s landing as taking place

... under the guns of H.M.S. "WARSPITE" which had just opened fire to join in the bombardment of Caen, the battle for which was beginning.²³²

And their narrative account continues:²³³

Since "Juno" beaches were a scant ten miles from Caen they were very much in the war zone for the following week. Dog fights occurred over the beach area and protracted and intense raids took place against the anchorage each night.

Concerning one aspect of "W"'s rather sudden move to Normandy, the D/PBM comments:²³⁴

Fortunately no stores were required to be taken initially and this eased the strain of recall and embarkation. Arms, extra blankets, tents and a few other odd items were the only articles of stores brought. As "W" Commando's role has been and still is one of relief, it has taken over the equipment as it has taken over the beach.

On Jul. 8 NOIC, Juno informed FOIC, British Assault Area (BAA) of the situation and future plans regarding the four Beach Commandos ("Peter, Sugar and Love with WILLY additional for training") under its command.²³⁵

- a) The opening of a new beach at Langrune (east of Bernières) necessitates two and a third commandos in the extended Juno sector.
- b) For "S" to be able to work the new beach, it will receive from "L" one party as well as replacements for various casualties suffered since D-Day.
- c) Remainder of "L" will return to U.K. as being in excess of Juno requirements.
- d) "The advent of "W" Commando is a convenient moment to make the above adjustments, and the following programme of Commando movements will therefore take place":

Sat. 8 Jul. --- "W" takes over duties of "P" on Mike beach.

Sun. 9 Jul. --- "P" and two "L" parties proceed to U.K. to re-equip, reporting to HMS Mastodon and Vectis respectively.

Wed. 19 Jul.	---	"P" and two "L" parties embark from U.K. for passage to BAA.
Thur. 20 Jul.	---	"P" relieves "W" on Mike beach. "W" transfers to Nan beach.
Sat. 22 Jul.	---	"S" proceeds to U.K., reporting to HMS Cricket on arrival for re-equipment.
	---	Third "L" party returns to U.K., reporting to HMS Vectis on arrival for disposal. Nominal lists of Officers and Ratings from "L" showing their eventual disposal will be forwarded separately.
Tues. 1 Aug.	---	"S" embarks for passage to BAA.
Thur. 3 Aug.	---	"W" proceeds to U.K. for disposal.

Lt. Crowhurst, ABM in W-1, had not been one of the seven officers who embarked for Normandy on Jul. 7. As a result of an audience with the Deputy Head, CNMO, he left "W" Commando on Jul. 8 and joined HMCS Prince David on Jul. 17 as Beachmaster for the LSI(M)'s assault landing craft.²³⁶ His W-1 ABM position would thereafter remain unfilled.

On Jul. 13 CNMO advised HMCS Niobe and NSHQ that Lts. Cronin and Vaillancourt (both W-3 ABMs), sixteen ratings, and the RN Beach Signal Unit were en route to join "W" in Juno sector.²³⁷ The next day Lt. Bentley, who was still in UK, informed SO(CO) that Lt. Finley had delivered "W"'s jeep to Newport where REME would overhaul and hold it until called for.²³⁸ On the same day Bentley told CNMO that he, Lt. Finley, PO Thacker, and ABs Madden, Joyes, and Greenwood would be proceeding to Normandy on Jul. 16, and that consequently:²³⁹

2. The entire personnel of "W" Commando is now overseas in France, with the exception of:-- Lieut. K.G. Crowhurst (drafted); AB Downey (hospital); A.B. Goodwin (drafted).
3. Please amend nominal lists recently forwarded.

With the arrival on Jul. 17 by way of LCI(L) 310 and *LCT 465 of Lt. Bentley, Lt. Finley, and four ratings, "W"'s officers were disposed for "Mike" beach duties as follows:

PBM	A/Lt. Cdr. O'Hagan
D/PBM & C.O.	A/Lt. Cdr. Johnstone
Admin. & Stores Officer	Lt. Bentley

W-1 Beach Party

BM -- Lt. D. Sutherland
 ABM -- Lt. E.G. Finley
 ABM -- (vacant)

W-2 Beach Party

Lt. A.D. Rayburn
 Lt. G. Hampson
 Lt. C. Christie

W-3 Beach Party

Lt. F. Angus
 Lt. J.B. Cronin
 Lt. J. Vaillancourt

With respect to Rating personnel, certain changes had occurred:

1. AB R. Crough drafted to General Service. Replaced by AB W. Wright.
2. AB D. Goodwin released on grounds of general unsuitability. To date no relief has arrived.
3. AB V. Downey left behind in hospital with hernia.
4. AB W. Newell, who was discharged to #20 Canadian General Hospital with a knee injury, has rejoined.
5. AB A. Morris and AB A. Petty are in hospital, former with ankle injury.

161004 July to CNMO, "W"'s final signal before its remaining members left HMS Vectis for Normandy, announced tersely: "Entire personnel of "W" Commando are now on far shore under NOIC JUNO".²⁴⁰

CNMO asked ANCXF on Jul. 17 whether it intended employing "W" operationally and, if not, when "W" might be "finally released".²⁴¹ The next day ANCXF informed Admiralty of its plan to release the following from Operation "Overlord".²⁴²

*LCT = Landing Craft Tank.

- (A) F, R, E, M, C, U, V.
- (B) One Party of L about July 22. Remainder of L to be retained to replace casualties and back up other Commandos in BAA.
- (C) W about August 3.

ANCXF also indicated that either T or Q would shortly be retained from Gold sector "for any future operations with Force J".²⁴³

Taken from four different sources, the following extracts provide some idea of what preoccupied the Canadian Beach Commando during its first ten days on Juno "Mike" beach:

1. (from C.O. and D/PBM's Aug. 7 monthly report)²⁴⁴

It may or may not be significant that records were set on two Beaches/Sectors when they were occupied by RCNBC "W". Much of the past training, vehicle handling in particular, has proved of immense value.

2. (from PBM's Aug. 31 final report)²⁴⁵

The men worked in well with the Army Beach Group and, owing to their course in vehicle driving, were able to be of considerable use to the Army and materially helped in the fast turn round of craft by being able to disembark all types of driverless vehicles. It is strongly recommended that this course be given to all Beach Parties as the addition of about sixty drivers to the *RASC drivers is invaluable and must have greatly helped the Army when they established their record days of getting nearly five hundred additional vehicles ashore each day.

3. (from RCN History Section -- London's 1944/45 Narrative "B")²⁴⁶

"W" Commando and No.9 Beach Group immediately and unreservedly took to each other with the good results inevitable in close co-operation. The landing figures began to show an immediate increase. Some of the credit for this rise in vehicles landed must go to "W" Commando. A course in

* RASC = Royal Army Service Corps.

vehicle handling taken during the spring had qualified all ranks and rates to drive any sort of vehicle, and this is in actual fact what they did. By the assistance which was thus afforded to the handful of *R.A.O.C. drivers in their disembarkation of driverless vehicles "W" Commando was thus able to materially accelerate the turn round of craft and so increase landing rate by about 500 vehicles per day. Since "Juno Mike" was the main **M.T. Beach for the British Assault Area, this increase in landing was of considerable importance.

4. (from CNMO Annual Review, 1944?, p.4)³⁰⁰

The Canadian Beach Commando Force which received a gruelling training in preparation for the invasion was not, however, called in until several days after D-Day, but in that time it helped discharge 66,000 vehicles and more than forty-two tons of stores on the beach to which it had been assigned.

"P" Commando returned from U.K. on Jul. 18 and relieved "W" who, in turn, took over on the next day from "S" on Nan beach which was used only for disembarking stores.²⁴⁷ An indication that "W"'s performance had been "more than satisfactory during the relieving period" is evidenced by the representation made by the Colonel of No.9 Beach Group to Captain Maud, RN (Chief PBM for Gold, Juno, and Sword sectors) in an attempt to retain "W" on Mike beach.²⁴⁸ George & Tovell describe and assess "W"'s performance in these words:²⁴⁹

Their lack of training in and knowledge of Landing Craft (and Ships) Tank was soon overcome by experience. Seamanship improved with the realization of the limitations of the ships and craft with which they were concerned. The steel pontoon causeway which divided "Mike Green" from "Mike Red" and consisted [sic] a considerable navigational hazard to LST's was quite beyond the knowledge and training of the unit, but with the help of R.N.R. "pilots" who were responsible for guiding LCT's onto it, the Beach Commando officers

* R.A.O.C. = Royal Army Ordnance Corps

** M.T. = Motor Transport

soon learned how to control it to advantage. It was not easy for these inexperienced officers to assume the responsibility of beaching twelve LST's on a dark, windy night, especially in view of the unsatisfactory improvised markings for the causeway. It was not surprising therefore that one should run aground on the causeway. Fortunately the ship's weight caused the causeway to subside into the mud with the tide's ebb before her back could be broken and she was refloated, undamaged, on the next flood. That no major mishaps occurred is due entirely to the watchfulness, forethought and above all hard work of the senior officers of the party who had to be present for all beachings.

From this point on we shall present a more or less chronological sequence of events which "W" experienced during its five remaining weeks in Normandy. George and Tovell report that besides carrying out nightly air raids, "the enemy began shelling "Juno Nan Beach" on the 21st July from mobile positions to the east of the Orne."²⁵⁰ Their narrative continues:²⁵¹

Fire from the Monitors "EREBUS" and "ROBERTS" failed to put a stop to this nuisance. Several raids by R.M. Commandos were frustrated by mined marshes lying between the coast and the batteries. Casualties to the R.A.'s and R.E.'s were caused, as well as damage to equipment, but only one officer was wounded by a shell fragment and had to be returned to the U.K. Vehicles, and especially "DUKW's" and Amphibious jeeps suffered from the shell fragmentation of these attacks.

According to PBM "W", Nan and Mike beaches were placed under "S" Commando on Jul.

22.²⁵² Two days later NOIC Juno's naval message 242332B (repeated to CNMO, NIOBE, FOBA, PBM Nan White) informed Admiralty for NCRO as follows:²⁵³

Regret to report Lt. ERIC FALT [sic] FINLEY RCNVR "W" suffered head injury due to shrapnel p.m. July 23rd[.] Admitted to hospital next of kin Mrs. M. ROSE [sic] FINLEY 3940 Cote Des Neiges Apt.D.101 Montreal Quebec Canada.

(N.B. Lt. Finley, an ABM in W-1, is probably the officer referred to in the preceding quotation)

Obviously referring to NOIC Juno's memorandum to *FOIC,BAA a fortnight previously (vide supra, p.53), CNMO advised ANCXF on Jul. 24 that unless suitable employment was contemplated for "W", it would be disbanded upon its Aug. 3 return to U.K.²⁵⁴ CNMO requested early confirmation regarding its disbandment intention and indicated that in any event the Commando should go initially to HMS Vectis to collect personal gear.²⁵⁵

Meanwhile, according to George and Tovell, "W"'s duties on Nan (a stores beach only)

consisted of beaching and drying out seven "Mark Five" LCT's and eight to twelve LBV's each tide on "Nan Red" and the mooring of **three to six coasters each daylight tide on "Nan Green". The latter beach was therefore given the additional role of Advance Headquarters for N.O.I.C. Courseulles and as such administered the despatch "DUKW" service for transporting personnel and signals to and from the craft shelter. The duty "DUKW" also transported Captain Patrols, Captain Northbound-Southbound Sailings, and Captain M/S to and from their headquarters ships for staff conferences with F.O.B.A.A.²⁵⁶

On Jul. 29 "W" was scheduled to return to U.K. but at the last minute NOIC Juno decided to retain the Canadian Commando for Mike beach and discharge "P" instead.²⁵⁷ With the Allied capture of Caen by the end of the month, the peak period had been reached and passed, so that the work for the Juno beach commandos gradually decreased over the ensuing three weeks.²⁵⁸

A "deferred" and "restricted" Aug. 1st memorandum from Admiralty informed HMS Monck that, according to CNMO, "RCN BC W is being disbanded from August 31st."²⁵⁹

The Aug. 7 letter which SO(CO) received from C.O. "W" on Aug. 11, is worth quoting in full.²⁶⁰

* FOIC,BAA = Flag Officer in Command, British Assault Area.

** The PBM's Aug. 31 report gives "two or three coasters".²⁵⁵

Dear "W.S."

Normandy -- Aug. 7th/44

Have sadly neglected official & unofficial correspondence. It was my intention at first to await our return & then attend to all such matters, fully and at leisure, but we were asked to stay and this alteration of plans is now forcing my hand.

I intend to get some sort of monthly report away which may or may not arrive coincident with this. Aside from that however there are one or two things you might do if you will be so kind. To begin with, we would like to know to what hospital Lt. E.G. Finley was finally taken. We suspect it was Basingstoke but can't be sure. Once the hospitals over here get hold of a body they get rid of it so quickly that it takes a trained Staff of Operators to follow the amazingly involved disposal route. We have been wondering about Finley, not knowing just how bad his wound may have been.

Item "two" is another hospital case: Lt. R.I. Shales, who ought to be in #18 C.G.H. In his case we have wondered if he may not be well enough to join us. It would be nice for him and he would be useful as we are short two officers [Crowhurst and Finley].

The third request is merely that you make certain CFMO is forwarding mail to Naval Party 1568A. I wrote telling him to delay the mail, when I thought we were returning. I have sent a signal since but can't be sure that everything is thoroughly understood.

We have been doing not too badly so far - touch wood, and still remain quite busy. Several cases of diarrhea have been tabled but not in sufficient numbers to impair our efficiency.

Once they got used to the idea most of the men & officers were quite content to spend the extra time on our present Beach. Have had a little shelling & what not but find the g-- d--- flies the worst nuisance. They are an absolute menace!

As far as I can gather, we shall be knocking about here at least for another two weeks and in all probability longer. Will endeavour ["u" in endeavour is crossed out] to keep you better posted in future.

[signed] Dick Johnstone

Further to the final paragraph, the Aug. 7 monthly report states succinctly: "It has been intimated "W" Commando will remain in the Normandy Area at least until August 21st."²⁶¹
SO(CO)'s reply to C.O. "W" was dated Aug. 14:²⁶²

Dear Johnstone,

Very many thanks for your note, which was the first we had heard from "W" aside from the casualty report on Finley. The latter is at Basingstoke Neurological and Plastic Surgery Hospital, according to the latest reports. Charlie Bond was in there with him for a while and said that Finley, still paralyzed down one side and suffering from severe headaches, seemed reasonably cheerful. Finley was of the opinion that the paralysis was only temporary. I spoke to Shales on the telephone at his temporary abode in the hospital near *Colchester. The official report that I had was that he was still using crutches and would not be out for a couple of weeks. Shales told me over the phone that he had not been using crutches and was going to dances! I told him to call me when he was released from hospital, but I doubt that it will be in time to join you.

We are arranging to have mail sent off, and hope it reaches you safely.

The future of "W" has been in our minds for some time. We expect that on the return to the United Kingdom you will be released, and the approved policy is for the majority of the officers to return to Canada and probably a number of the men. Those who will remain in the United Kingdom include officers, Sub Lieutenants or Acting Lieutenants, who may be required for the spare officers' "pool" here. The "pool" is not a large one, and the LCI(L) officers will, I expect, supply the bulk of those required. Seamen who have been over here less than two years, and certainly less than one year, may be retained for the pool here to provide the men required as replacements for corvettes, frigates and destroyers. Actually, if men are interested in a sea-going career, this is an excellent opportunity for them.

Best wishes to all, and please be sure to telephone me when you return to the United Kingdom. We have told the Admiralty that you should arrive back at "Vectis" to pick/pack up your gear. The jeep should be brought to London.

Yours sincerely,

[signed]

W.S. Brooke
Lieutenant Commander, RCNVR,
Staff Officer (Combined Operations).

* No. 18 Canadian General Hospital was located near Colchester, Essex.

Meanwhile the Naval Board Secretary's Aug. 7 memorandum to CNMO indicated that disposal arrangements for personnel on the thirty Canadian-manned LCI(L)s after paying off would also apply to "the members of the Beach Commando Unit as and when they can be released."²⁶³ Two days later SCNO(L) informed NSHQ that with the exception of ten officers and some seamen who would form a pool at HMCS Niobe, all LCI(L) personnel "will be returned to Canada" and the "Beach Party will accompany them."²⁶⁴

And that same day CNMO sent "W" (and the three LCI(L) flotillas) a set of guidelines entitled "Disposition of Personnel on Paying-Off and Closing Down of Activities."²⁶⁵ Ratings were directed to report to HMCS Niobe and put desired requests for subsequent appointments in writing. Regarding "W", two officers (O'Hagan and Sutherland) would remain "RN loan" and all others (Angus, Bentley, Campbell, Christie, Cronin, Finley, Hampson, Johnstone, Rayburn, Shales, and Vaillancourt), being "surplus to requirements in UK", would be retained in HMCS Niobe pool.²⁶⁶

With respect to future disposition of both LCI(L) and "W" personnel, CNMO expressed its opinion on Aug. 10 to the Naval Board:²⁶⁷

... future employment of a number of these officers merits, it is submitted, very careful consideration. They have given excellent service, frequently in unusual situations. A number of the senior ones merit early consideration for command, and acting Lieutenant-Commanders should retain (if possible) rank.

On Aug. 11 and/or 12 CNMO requested FOBAA to be kept informed about "W" from whom it had received "no official reports or signals" since the Canadian Commando arrived in Normandy "a month ago"; and, as a consequence, its mail was not being forwarded.²⁶⁸ Two days afterwards FOBAA advised CNMO that "mail for "W" should go to FMO

Courseulles to arrive up to and including 20th August" and thereafter be retained in UK.²⁶⁹

In what appears to have been his last official communication from Normandy, "W"'s C.O. requested CNMO on Aug. 18 to

inform all authorities likely to be concerned, that designation "1568A" ought to be used no longer as a naval party number for RCNBC "W". This number applies to a large operational group from which we are on the point of withdrawing.²⁷⁰

Regretful of the existing confusion, he suggests that "until exclusive party number allotted", their address be changed to RCNBC "W", c/o GPO, London, as formerly.²⁷¹

The dates of the Commando's departure from Normandy and arrival back in England vary:

1. On Aug. 24 SO(CO), on behalf of CNMO, notified NSHQ that ""W" returned from France 22nd August....."²⁷²
2. The D/PBM's Aug. 30 report to CNMO states that the Commando's "return was effected by LCI(L) on August 20th."²⁷³
3. The PBM's Aug. 31 report has "W" departing by LCI(L) on Aug. 20 and arriving at Cowes on the 22nd.²⁷⁴
4. An Aug. 23 exchange of signals between HMS Vectis and HMS Armadillo gives p.m. Aug. 22 for "W"'s arrival at Cowes.²⁷⁵
5. In their narrative of December 1944/January 1945, George and Tovell write: " "W" Commando turned over to "S" on 23rd August and arrived at Cowes p.m. 24th August by LCI(L)."²⁷⁶

Section 8 Disbanding at HMS Vectis (Pines Camp) -- August 22 to 31, 1944

With "W" back in HMS Vectis, the authorities had to decide upon its immediate and future disposition. Admiralty considered sending it to HMS Armadillo and/or HMS Dundonald II after nine days leave, but apparently accommodation posed a problem.²⁷⁷ On Aug. 24 CNMO advised HMS Vectis that having been released by ANCXF's 17 1635 B July, "W" was being disbanded and the ratings granted ten days leave before reporting to HMCS Niobe with all their personal gear, while the officers were to report forthwith to CNMO.²⁷⁸ C.O. "W" notified the Fleet Mail Officer on Aug. 26 of these arrangements and indicated that all personnel would probably be dispersed by Aug. 30 until which time the Commando's headquarters remained at HMS Vectis (Pines Camp) near Cowes.²⁷⁹

The task of assembling and turning in "W"'s equipment and materials is described in A/Lt. Cdr. Johnstone's Aug. 30 final report to CNMO:²⁸⁰

Lieutenant J. Bentley has supervised the return of all stores with the exception of Arms and Ammunition. Gunnery Stores have been mustered and returned under the supervision of Lieut. F. Angus. All Naval Stores have been taken on charge by H.M.S. Vectis, Gunnery Stores have been returned to S.A.S.O. R.N. Armament Depot, Priddys Hard Gosport; surplus and second hand battledress, boots, denims and other items of Army clothing and equipment have been forwarded to the Army Return Stores Depot, Tongham. Temporary receipts for the respective stores have been sent with covering letters, by the safe hand of Lieut. Rayburn, to Commanding Officer, HMCS NIOBE.

Two separate lists show items returned by Lt. Angus between Aug. 26 and 28, one for gunnery stores and the other for arms and ammunition.²⁸¹ Each is reproduced herewith.

RETURNED GUNNERY STORES OF R.C.N.B.C. "W".

Webbing Eguipment [sic]. Patt. 1937.

98	82	Haversack (Large)
84	86	Packs (Small)
95	87	Water Bottle Carriers
35	33	Frogs
	45	Rifle Slings
84	83	Straps Shoulder (left)
85	80	Straps Shoulder (right)
25	25	Belts, Waist
114	115	Braces
40	39	Pouches (pistol)
	74	Pouches (rifle) [N.B. The "74" is crossed out]
23	24	Holsters (pistol)
	48 prs.	Gaiters
126	120	Straps Support (large pack)
	96 prs.	Straps Shoulder (large pack)
	65	Capes anti-gas
	79 prs.	Gloves anti-gas
38	67	Mess tins
	21	mess Plates (tin)
	14	forks
	16	Knives
	12	Spoons
74	73	Water Bottles
	6	Enamel mug.
	3	Gas Masks (assault)
	1	Gas Mask (old Type)
	2	Steel Helmet
	3	Leather Pistol Holsters.

- [N.B.]
1. Below and to the right of the above, there is a long minutely handwritten list of other stores items.
 2. Where two numbers appear beside any of the above items, the right-hand one is crossed out on the original; thus the remaining number represents how many were received.
 3. Near the bottom of the list is a pencilled notation: "returned Webbing by Lieut. F. Angus, RCNVR To Priddys Hard on 28/8/44".
 4. "signed E. White for S.A.S.O. 14 Nov. '44" is written at the bottom of the page.^{282]}

RETURNED ARMS AND AMMUNITION FROM R.C.N.B.C. "W"

	30	- .303 Rifles No.4 Mk.1	29
28	30	Bayonets No. 4 II.	
27	29	Scabbards for Bayonet No.4 II.	
	3	Strip Lewis complete (cases)	
	50	Mags. Lewis	
	9	Lanchesters	
	81	Mags.	
	6	Mags. Filler Tools	
	2	Comb. Tools	
	7	Bayonets No.I	
	8	Scabbards Bayonets No. I + II	
	1	Chest for Lanchester	
	1	Mk II .303 Bren L.M.G.	
	2	Mk Ix .303 Bren L.M.G.	
	3	Barrel Assy, Mk. II	
	3	Chests Bren .303 M.G. Mk. I.	
22	24	Mags. Bren	
2	3	Rods cleaning cylinder [N.B. The "3" is crossed out]	
	3	Brushes cleaning cylinder	
	3	Mops cleaning cylinder	
	3	Wallets spare parts (filled)	
2	3	Bottles oil (pooled)	

NOTE. These guns are on charge to RCNMO Haymarket[:]

41	.38 S & W Pistols Revolver [sic]
21	Cleaning rod (revolver)
35	Wire brushes (revolver)
19	Pull throughs
2	Screwdrivers
8	Wire Gauges

- [N.B.]
1. Where two numbers appear beside any of the above items, it is presumed that the left-hand one represents how many were received.
 2. Near the bottom of the list is a pencilled notation: "returned Arms by Lieut. F. Angus, RCNVR, RCNBC "W" To Priddys Hard 28/8/44".
 3. "signed E. White for S.A.S.O. 14 Nov '44" is written at the bottom of the page.^{283]}

On Aug. 29 "W"'s C.O. advised HMS Armadillo's C.O. and CNMO's Secretary that:

1. all naval stores held by the Commando had been taken on charge by HMS Vectis;
2. all arms and ammunition, webbing equipment, and sundry gunnery stores had been returned to RN Armament Depot at Gosport; and
3. surplus and secondhand battledress, army boots, denims, etc., as well as a typewriter (Z094147), had been forwarded to Army Return Stores at Tongham.²⁸⁴

On the same day, meanwhile, SO(CO) at CNMO was informing such Canadian and British naval and military authorities as NSHQ, HMCS Niobe, Admiralty, RAMLC, and HMS Armadillo that Beach Commando "W" and the three LCI(L) flotillas would be disbanded effective Aug. 31.²⁸⁵ SO(CO)'s earlier resignation request (vide supra, pp.45-46) was approved "with regret" the next day by Vice-Admiral Nelles.²⁸⁶

The Commando's Aug. 30 "FINAL REPORT" to CNMO (Ref. W.L.O.26) contains several comments concerning disbandment:²⁸⁷

1. Upon returning from Normandy, most personnel proceeded on leave on Aug. 26.
2. "Paying off" details "were completed as of this date, with the departure of Lieutenant Rayburn and twenty-nine ratings for leave and disposal...in accordance with C.N.M.O.'s Signal 241116B."
3. "Left in hospital through illness or injury are:- Lieutenant E.G. Finley and ABs V. Downey (convalescing from hernia operation), A. Morris (ankle injury), W. Cronhite [sic] (appendicitis)."
4. "All Service Documents have been sent by safe hand to Commanding Officer, H.M.C.S. NIOBE. Residue of stationery, together with Imperial typewriter has been sent to Secretary, C.N.M.O. London by special baggage party. All books and publications issued by the Canadian Distributing Authority have been returned through Secretary, C.N.M.O.. A master list has been enclosed."

(N.B. The "baggage" referred to above, for which a SUPPLY/RECEIPT ticket was issued and dated Aug. 30, consisted of a large wooden box containing: a) an oil-skin wrapped parcel addressed to Canadian Distributing Authority; b) a parcel addressed to Canadian Fleet Mail Officer; c) sundry items of stationery; d) typewriter (Z094147) and metal container.)²⁸⁸

5. "The "W" Commando Jeep was picked up from R.E.M.E. Newport, where it had been overhauled and painted. It is being returned to C.N.M.O. London."

There follows, in summary form, some of the main comments made by PMB O'Hagan in his "Report on the training and operational activities of Royal Canadian Naval Beach Commando "W", 31st August 1944".²⁸⁹

1. Despite lack of training and knowledge, "W" worked well and usefully in Normandy. Gradual improvement occurred in seamanship with respect to handling various landing craft.
2. Not having landed until a month after D-Day, it is difficult to evaluate the various training courses taken, "but had they made an assault landing I have no doubt they would have proved useful".
3. While the Petty Officers and Leading Seamen who were promoted to Combined Operations rates did perform well, older and more experienced officers and men would be and would have been more suitable.

On Oct. 30, two months after "W" had disbanded, C.O., HMCS Niobe received a signal dated Oct. 14 from C.O., RN Beach Commando "L" about "6 Smith Weston revolvers [serial numbers are included] left in armoury at Pines Camp, HMS Vectis, after "L" Commando returned from Normandy."²⁹⁶ "L" had then proceeded to HMS Armadillo leaving their arms at Vectis; and, upon returning, the six revolvers were evidently missing. The remainder of the signal reads as follows:²⁹⁷

The Armoury at Pines Camp was used in our absence by RCNBC "W", and it is possible that some of these pistols may have been taken by mistake by "W" Commando. Request you will make the necessary inquiries to help us clear this matter up.

FOOTNOTES

<u>Number(s)</u>	<u>Reference(s) (vide BIBLIOGRAPHY)</u>
1	B.11. and/or <u>Combined Operations Pamphlet No.10</u> , p.13
2	<u>Combined Operations Pamphlet No.17</u>
3-4	B.1. file 1037-34-1
5	B.3. file 1037-34-4
6	B.5.
7	B.5. file N-08-1-12
8	B.1. file 1037-34-1
9	B.3. file 1037-34-4
10	B.11.
12	B.1. file 1037-34-1
13-18	A.2.
19	A.3.
20	G. vol.II, p.443
21	B.5. file 09-1-2
22	B.11. file 33-26-2
23-24	B.1. file 1037-34-1
25-26	B.11.
27	B.1.
28-29	B.1. file 1037-34-1
30	B.5.
31-38	B.1. file 1037-34-1 and/or B.5. file N-012-1
39	75/496, History Directorate, DND, Ottawa
40	B.5.
41	B.5. and/or B.11.
42-44	B.11.
45	B.8. (file NS 1054-1-8?)
46	B.5.
47	B.11. file 33-11-0
48	B.11.
49	B.5. (file 09-1-2?)
50	B.10. file 33-12-12
51	B.11. only implies these changes; no official record has been found
52-53	B.11.
54	C. file 33-11-0
55	B.11. file C.S. 33-17-1
56-57	B.11.
58	C. file 33-11-0
59	B.11.
60-61	B.5. file 0-12-1-3
62	B.5. and/or B.11.
63	B.5. file 0-12-1-3 and/or B.11.
64-66	B.5. file CS 33-17-1
67-68	B.11.
69	B.5. file 0-12-1-3 and/or B.11.
70	<u>Vide infra</u> , p.22
71	B.5. file CS 33-17-1

Number(s)Reference(s) (vide BIBLIOGRAPHY)

72-75	B.11. file 33-17-1
76	B.11.
77	B.10. and/or B.11.77
78	B.5. and/or B.11.
79	Macbeth told author (telcon -- Jul. 17, 1990)
80-85	B.11.
86	B.2.
87	B.11.
88	B.11. file 33-17-1
89	B.11.
90	B.5. and/or B.11.
91-93	B.11.
94	B.11. file 33-17-1 (vol.1)
95	B.11.
96	B.5. file CS 33-17-1
97	C. file S 1037-34-1 (vol.2 combined)
98-99	C. file 33-11-0
100	B.11.
101-103	B.11. file 33-17-1 (vol.1)
104	B.11.
105	D. p.30
106-110	B.11.
111-112	B.11. file C.S. 33-17-1
113-114	B.11.
115	D. p.6
116	D. (<u>Enclosure A</u>)
117-118	B.11.
119	B.10. file 33-11-16 and/or B.11.
120	B.5. file 012-1-3, B.11. and/or C.
121-122	B.5.
123	B.5. file 12-1-3
124	B.5. file 012-1-3
125	B.11. file 33-17-1
126	B.5. file 12-1-3
127	B.11.
128	B.5. file 012-1-3 and/or B.11.
129	B.5. file 012-1-3
130-131	B.11.
132	B.11. file 33-17-1
133-135	B.11.
136	B.5. file 012-1-3
137	B.10. file 33-11-16 and/or B.11.
138	B.10 file 33-11-16
139	D. p.30
140	B.11.
141	B.11. file 33-17-1
142	B.5. file 012-1-3 and/or B.11. file 33-17-1
143-144	B.11.
145	B.6. file NB-66-3 and/or B.11. file 33-17-1

<u>Number(s)</u>	<u>Reference(s) (vide BIBLIOGRAPHY)</u>
146	B.11. file 33-17-1
147	B.11. file 33-17-1 (vol.I)
148-149	B.11.
150-151	B.11. file 33-17-1
152	B.16.
153-154	B.11.
155	B.11. file 33-17-1
156-157	B.11.
158	B.11. file 33-17-1
159	B.11.
160	B.11. file 33-17-1
161	B.11.
162-166	B.11. file 33-17-1
167	B.11. file 33-17-1 (vol.I)
168	B.11.
169	B.5. file 012-1-3 and/or B.11. file 33-17-1
170	B.11.
171-172	B.11. file 33-17-1 and/or C.
173-175	B.11.
176	B.11. and/or C.
177	D. p.30
178-179	B.6. file NB-66-3 and/or B.11. file 33-17-1
180	B.11. file C.S. 33-17-1
181	B.6. and/or B.11.
182	B.11. file C.S. 33-17-1 (vol.I)
183	B.11. and/or Jan. 12, 1990 letter from Christie to author
184	B.11. file 33-17-1
185	B.11.
186	B.11. file 33-17-1
187-190	B.11. file 33-26-4
191-192	B.11.
193	B.6. file NB 66-3
194	B.6. and/or B.11. file 33-17-1 (vol.I)
195	B.6. file NB-66-3 and/or B.11. file 33-17-1 (vol.I)
196	B.6. file NB-66-3
197	B.11. file 33-17-1
198	B.6. file NB-66-3
199	B.11. file 33-17-1 (vol.I)
200	B.11.
201	Oct. 7, 1990 letter from D. MacArthur to author
202-203	B.1. file 1037-34-1
204	B.11.
205-206	B.11. file 33-17-1
207	D. p.30
208	B.11. file 33-17-1 (vol.2)
209-214	B.11. file 33-17-1
215	D. p.30
216	B.11. file C.S. 33-17-1
217	B.11. file C.S. 33-17-1 (vol.I)

Number(s)Reference(s) (vide BIBLIOGRAPHY)

218-219	B.11.
220	B.6, file NB-66-3 and/or B.11. file 33-17-1 (vol.2)
221	B.11. file 33-17-1 (vol.2)
222	B.10. file 33-16-1 (vol. II) and/or B.11.
223	B.11. and/or D. (vol.II), p.375
224	B.10. file 33-16-1 (vol.II) and/or B.11.
225	B.11. file 33-17-1 (vol.II) and/or D. (vol.II), p.375
226	B.6. file NB 66-3 and/or B.11. file 33-17-1 (vol.2)
227	B.10. file 33-16-1 (vol.II) and/or B.11.
228	B.6. file NB 66-3
229	B.11. file 33-17-1
230-233	D. (vol.II), p.375
234-237	B.11.
238	B.11. file 33-17-1 (vol.II)
239	B.6. and/or B.11.
240-245	B.11.
246	D. (vol.II), p.375
247-251	D. (vol.II), p.[376]
252	B.11. file 33-17-1 (vol.I)
253	B.11. file 33-11-0
254-255	B.11.
256-258	D. (vol.II), p.[376]
259-260	B.11. file 33-17-1
261	B.11.
262	B.11. file C.S.33-17-1
263-264	C.
265-266	B.11.
267	B.11. file 33-11-0
268-275	B.11. file 33-17-1
276	D. (vol.II), p.[376]
277-280	B.11. file C.S.33-17-1
281-283	B.6.
284-285	B.11. file C.S.33-17-1
286	B.11.
287	B.6. file NB 66-3
288-289	B.11. file 33-17-1 (vol.I)
290	D. (vol.II), p.[376]
291	B.6.
292-293	F. p.201
294-295	C. (pt.3)
296	B.11.
299	B.14.
301-302	F. pp.23, 24, 47, 54, 55
304	F. p.46

APPENDICES

- I. COMBINED OPERATIONS PAMPHLETS
- II. RCN BEACH COMMANDO "W"
- III. NOMINAL LIST "W" BEACH COMMANDO
- IV. COMBINED OPERATIONS ESTABLISHMENTS, U.K.
- V. OPERATION "NEPTUNE"
- VIa. MEMORANDUM TO STAFF OFFICER, COMBINED OPERATIONS,
January 19, 1944
- VIb. February 8, 1944 LETTER FROM SCFO(L) TO MINISTER OF NATIONAL
DEFENCE FOR NAVAL SERVICES
- VII. HITLER'S "COMMANDO ORDER"
- VIII. CANADIAN NEWSPAPER COVERAGE
- IX. BIOGRAPHETTES

COMBINED OPERATIONS PAMPHLETS

<u>No.</u>	<u>Title (year)</u>	<u>Date of Publication</u>
1	GENERAL (1942)	September, 1942
2	BEACH ORGANISATION AND MAINTENANCE	September, 1942 March, 1944
6	R. SIGNALS (1941) [provisional]	17th September, 1941
6B	THE BEACH SIGNAL UNIT (1943)	February, 1943
8	ASSAULT BRIGADE PLANNING including Preparation of Landing Tables and Loading of Craft (1942)	October, 1942
9	RESPONSIBILITIES FOR THE LOADING AND DISCHARGE OF SHIPS AND CRAFT (1942)	November, 1942
10	ABBREVIATIONS and DEFINITIONS (1944)	January, 1944
11	LANDING SHIPS INFANTRY (1943)	May, 1943
14A	MINOR LANDING CRAFT (1943)	May, 1943
14B	LANDING CRAFT SIGNAL PAMPHLET (Other than L.C.T.) (1942)	August, 1942
17	RN BEACH COMMANDOS (1943)	April, 1943
31	DRIVING INSTRUCTIONS for COMBINED OPERATIONS (1944)	March, 1944
38	RASC (1943)	March, 1943
39B	RAMC (Based on 1942 organization of Field Medical Units) (1943)	September, 1943
40	R.A.O.C. (1942)	December, 1942
41A and 41B	R.E.M.E. (1942)	
	41A. Part I - General Considerations Part II - Organization in Assault Force	
	41B. Organization for Units landing after the Assault Formation	October, 1942
<u>N.B.</u>	All of the above, as well as many others not listed, are available (mainly in photocopy form) at History Directorate, Department of National Defence, Ottawa	

RCN BEACH COMMANDO "W"

	<u>Name of Officer</u>	<u>Rank(s)</u>	<u>Position(s)</u>
1.	Angus, F.	S/Lt., Lt.	ABM W-3; BM W-3
2.	Baum, G.V.C.	S/Lt.	Beach Party
3.	Bentley, J.	Lt.	Administration & Stores Officer
4.	Bridle, P.A.	Lt.	Beach Party
5.	Campbell, L.O.	Lt.	BM W-3
6.	Christie, C.B.	Lt.	ABM W-2
7.	Cronin, J.B.	Lt.	ABM W-2
8.	Crowhurst, K.G.	S/Lt., Lt.	ABM W-1
9.	Cunningham, J.R.	Lt.	ABM W-2
10.	Finley, E.G.	Lt.	ABM W-1
11.	Hampson, H.G.	Lt.	ABM W-2
12.	Hatch, C.	Lt.	BM W-2, BM W-3
13.	Johnstone, R.J.	Lt., A/Lt. Cdr.	D/PBM, Commanding Officer
14.	Macbeth, J.K.	Lt.(n)	ABM W-3
15.	Macdonald, W.M.	Lt. Cdr.	PBM
16.	O'Hagan, D.J.P.	A/Lt. Cdr.	PBM
17.	Rayburn, A.D.	Lt.	ABM W-2, BM W-2
18.	Rumpel, O.H.	S/Lt.	Beach Party
19.	Sutherland, D.M.	Lt.	BM W-1
20.	Vaillancourt, J.	Lt.	ABM W-3
21.	Gray, J.G.	S/Lt.	Liaison Officer

N.B. The above list shows the rank(s) and position(s) for each of the twenty-one RCNVR officers who held appointment at various times.

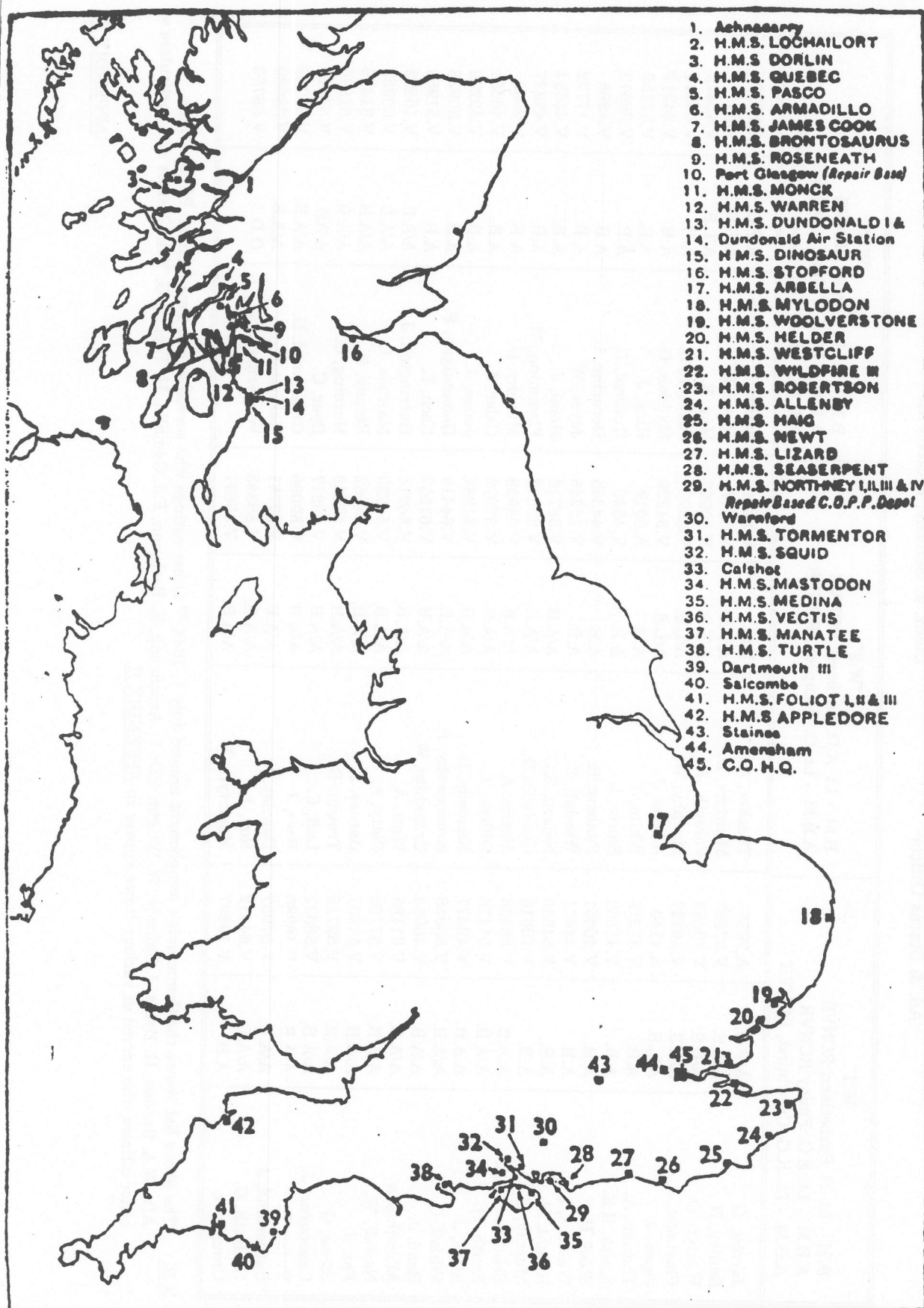
NOMINAL LIST "W" BEACH COMMANDO

Principal Beachmaster
Commanding Officer
Ad. & Stores Officer

A/Lieut. Cdr. D.J. O'Hagan G.M. R.C.N.V.R.
A/Lieut. Cdr. R.J. Johnstone R.C.N.V.R.
Lieut. J. Bentley, R.C.N.V.R.

"W.1"			"W.2"			"W.3"		
B.M. - Lt. D. Sutherland RCNVR A.B.M. - Lt. E.G. Finley RCNVR A.B.M. - Lt. K.G. Crowhurst, RCNVR			B.M. - Lt. A.D. Rayburn, RCNVR A.B.M. - Lt. G. Hampson, RCNVR			B.M. - Lt. F. Angus, RCNVR A.B.M. - Lt. J.B. Cronin RCNVR A.B.M. - Lt. J. Vaillancourt, RCNVR		
Jarrett, G.	A.P.O.	A.2635	Thacker, A.	P.O.	V.1434	Smith, I.	A.P.O.	A.1702
Smiley, D.	A/L.S.	V.37293	Mcintyre, D.	A/P.O.	V.5747	Jones, R.	A/L.S.	V.841
Warren, D.	A/L.S.	V.39693	Forsyth, J.	A/L.S.	V.10963	Hay, R.	A/L.S.	V.45449
Playtouw, J.	A/L.S.	V.46327	Murphy, W.	A/L.S.	V.5392	Jackson, E.	A.B.	V.44344
Joyce, J.	A/L.S.	A.4140	Adams, J.	A/L.S.	V.31229	Madden, G.	A.B.	V.24212
Therien, A.	A.B.	V.31372	White, J.	A.B.	A.5019	King, J.	A.B.	V.51758
Smith, R.E.	A.B.	V.41800	Sauve, I.	A.B.	V.4520	Quesnel, L.	A.B.	V.39610
Steel, H.	A.B.	V.40651	Faubert, R.	A.B.	V.44355	Deruchie, L.	A.B.	V.4365
Watkins, I.	A.B.	V.44071	Woodall, E.	A.B.	V.19246	Joyes, W.	A.B.	V.17772
Knight, N.	A.B.	V.54536	Nelson, R.C.	A/A.B.	V.38716	Horel, J.	A.B.	V.45584
Murray, H.	A.B.	V.19616	Goodwin, D.	A/A.B.	V.62012	Flemming, M.	A.B.	V.42327
Pendlebury, A.	A/A.B.	V.56436	Morris, A.	A/A.B.	V.38938	Murphy, D.	A.B.	V.2980
Smith, H.	A/A.B.	V.51476	Offless, J.	A/A.B.	V.37973	Caler, J.	A.B.	V.46031
Allen, J.	A/A.B.	V.49877	Kennedy, D.	A/A.B.	V.41864	Jones, J.	A.B.	V.42208
Vilneff, G.	A/A.B.	V.53046	Kroschewsky, P.	A/A.B.	V.64415	Demontigny, P.	A.B.	V.50928
Read, J.	A/A.B.	V.45963	Cronkhite, W.	A/A.B.	V.61557	Koch, L.	A.B.	V.51953
Albrechtson	A/A.B.	V.61185	Watt, A.	A/A.B.	V.56914	Harrington, J.	A/A.B.	V.16892
Newell, W.	A/A.B.	V.57709	Petty, A.	A/A.B.	V.54229	Mantais, L.	A/A.B.	V.60982
Fox, J.	A/A.B.	V.57307	Barnes, R.	A/A.B.	V.47862	Rennie, F.	A/A.B.	V.61476
Stone, G	A/A.B.	V.59719	Trewin, D.	A/A.B.	V.57668	Harding, C.	A/A.B.	V.61890
Casbourne, J.	A/A.B.	V.56832	Luff, C.	A/A.B.	V.56817	Byer, C.	A/AB	V.54476
Burse, R.	A/A.B.	V.48280	Ross, J.	A/A.B.	V.59089	Greenwood, D.	A/A.B.	V.61245
Sutherland, J.	A/A.B.	V.57957	Downey, V.	A/A.B.	V.57751	Germaine, A.	A/A.B.	V.38689
Hildreth, C.	A/A.B.	V.64412	Roy, J.	A/A.B.	V.58383	Westerman, L.	O.D.	V.58750
Crough, R.	A.B.	V.19467	Macintyre, P.	A/A.B.	V.55697			

N.B. The above list shows the Commando's complement around July 1, 1944.²⁹⁹ Other ratings who served at one time include: PO G. Winn;
ABs W.A. Burden, H. Byers, J. Skinner, W. Wright; ODs C. Armstrong, K. Beckman, F.J. Gamblin, H. Tapper, G. Yule. Names and particulars of
other officers who served at various times appear in APPENDIX II.



Source: History of the Combined Operations Organization, 1940-1945. London: 1956, p.11.

OPERATION "NEPTUNE"



ENGLAND

ALLIED NAVAL EXPEDITIONARY FORCE

(Admiral Sir Bertram Ramsay, R.N.)

Western Task Force

(Rear-Adm. A.G. Kirk, U.S.N.)

1st U.S. Army

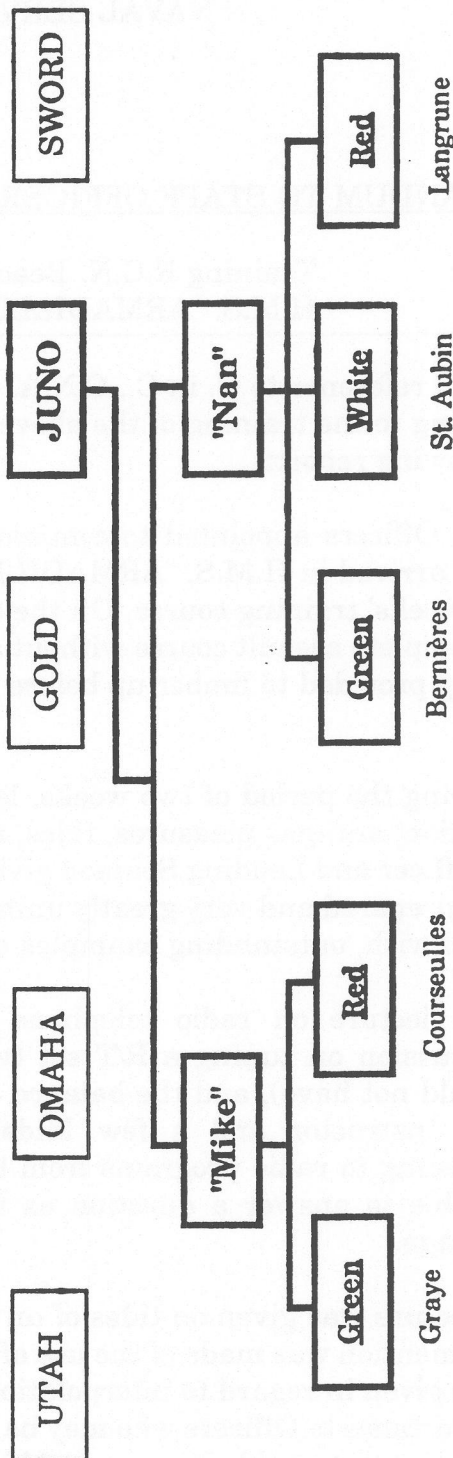
(Lt-Gen. O.N. Bradley)

Eastern Task Force

(Rear-Adm. Sir P. Vian, R.N.)

2nd British Army

(Lt-Gen. M.C. Dempsey)



FRANCE

NAVAL SERVICE

WMM/LMH

File No.NS.S.1037-34-17
Vol.1(Staff)

MEMORANDUM TO STAFF OFFICER, COMBINED OPERATIONS

Reference: Training R.C.N. Beach Commando "W",
H.M.S. "ARMADILLO"

With reference to C. in C., C.N.A.'s 141740 and our discussion of today on matters relating to the training of the above noted Commando Unit, I would like to make the following report:

2. The Officers appointed to command the first Canadian R.C.N. Beach Commando Unit arrived in H.M.S. "ARMADILLO" on the 5th of December, 1943, to carry out a two weeks' training course. On the 6th of December, these Officers were taken over the complete assault course without any previous physical training or any opportunity being provided to limber up before undertaking the strenuous nature of this training.

During the period of two weeks, lectures were given on the subjects of airplane recognition, anti-gas measures, tides, radio telephone, small arms, etc. The Officers, Petty Officer and Leading Seamen giving these lectures came to the lecture room entirely unprepared and very greatly uninformed in regard to the subjects that they were to deal with, outstanding examples of which may be listed as follows:

- (a) The lecture on radio telephone consisted of a few minutes discussion on tuning a R/T set (which the class was told they would not have), and the balance of the period was taken up by the Instructor and a few Midshipmen and Sub-lieutenants listening to radio programs from the B.B.C. The Instructor was unable to answer a question as to the batteries used or their voltage.
- (b) A lecture was given on tides of an extremely elementary nature. No mention was made of the use of tide tables, and no instruction was given in regard to interpolation which appears of the utmost importance to Officers who may be called upon to land on beaches where no exact tide datum would be available. The Instructor, in response to a question, said that he had never heard the terms "apogee", "perigee", "aphelion", "perihelion".

- (c) The lectures on airplane recognition consisted of a statement as to the importance of knowing the planes which might be met, and the class was instructed that they should be familiar with 60 types, but the types were not enumerated, and no publications were provided for their instruction. The lectures on this subject consisted of the lecturer pointing out obvious points of a plane to be observed for the purpose of recognition. In each case the lecturer did not spend more than five or six minutes on his subject and used the balance of the period for discussion with members of the class on the relative merits of various types of plane from a fighting or bombing point of view.

3. With the exception of a few lectures on beach organization, all of the instruction was on a similar scale including the lectures on small arms. The lecturers were normally from five to fifteen minutes late, the syllabus was continually changed without previous notice, and hardly one operation was carried out according to schedule, for example, after waiting forty minutes to be briefed for a night operation, which was to consist of an opposed landing, the Officers were advised that the plan could not be carried out as the Gunnery Officer had forgotten all about it. I was advised by Senior Lieutenants of the Unit that in an operation to be carried out at Inveraray during my absence in London on duty the Unit was instructed to be aboard Landing Craft at 0600 and that they waited there until 0800, when a Lieutenant, R.N., appeared to tell them that he had forgotten to make any arrangements for the necessary equipment to carry out the operation, with the result that the operation, from an instructional point of view, was a complete failure.

4. On the completion of two weeks' training, it was proposed that the Canadian Officers would take over command of the Canadian Unit and continue their training in H.M.S. "ARMADILLO" in the presence of the R.N. Officers who had command of the Unit for the previous eight weeks. As the Canadian Officers were advised three days after their arrival in H.M.S. "ARMADILLO" that the Canadian Ratings had voted to retain their R.N. Officers, it was regarded by me as undesirable that the Unit should continue to carry out their training in this establishment.

5. Special training notes were distributed to the Officers shortly after their arrival, consisting of mimeographed sheets, and the Officers were at the same time advised that these notes were quite out of date and about 60 per cent incorrect. No effort was made to provide corrections for such notes.

[signed]

(W.M. Macdonald)
Lt. Cdr., R.C.N.V.R.

O T T A W A
19th January, 1944.

S E C R E T.

8th February, [194]4.

Senior Canadian Flag Officer (Overseas),
Navy Office of Canada,
King's House, 10 Haymarket,
London, S.W.1

Dear Mr. Macdonald:

During my recent [January 30th] visit to the Clyde area and to H.M.S. "Armadillo", where the Canadian Beach Party is being trained, I made, and caused others to make, such inquiries as it was possible to make, when visiting the command of another Flag Officer, as to the justification that might exist for the statements made by Lieut.Commander W.M. Macdonald, RCNVR, in his report dated 19th January.

It appears that there was a certain amount of misunderstanding on both sides. The Canadian personnel arrived full of keenness and fire expecting instant and equal keenness plus action. This was not forthcoming and I gather that the whole party reacted like a pricked balloon.

Several factors added to this sense of let-down. The course of lectures, being designed to meet the needs of R.N. personnel, contained a certain amount of material which the Canadian officers, being generally older and more senior than their R.N. colleagues, already knew and regarded as elementary. The Force which the Canadian party was to join on completion of their training could not immediately receive them, and consequently they had to remain at "Armadillo" in an isolated establishment, located on the West shore of Loch Long, which can only be reached by water, and the weather prevailing there at this time of the year is bad. All these factors added a depressing influence.

Macdonald did not help matters by taking himself too seriously, and insisting on certain rights and privileges as the Senior Officer of the Canadian Beach Party - a position for which he was most unsuitable. He himself was a misfit who, instead of trying to fit into the working organization, saw himself in the light of a crusader for the rights of others. In consequence, he served only to magnify differences instead of composing them.

Macdonald and two other officers on one occasion proceeded on week-end leave which ended on noon, Sunday. They returned to "Armadillo" the following Tuesday.

Two officers of the Canadian Beach Party are, among others, about to be court-martialled for being involved in an incident in which a landing craft was taken without permission for passage across the Clyde.

It is hoped that orders for the Canadian Beach Party to join their Force will be issued at an early date, and as no further Canadian personnel will be trained at H.M.S. "Armadillo", these difficulties will not arise again.

The Canadian Beach Party, which is designated Beach Party "W", has been allocated to Force "J". The Canadian L.C.I.(L)'s have also been allocated to this Force, and it is expected that H.M.C.S. "Prince David" and "Prince Henry" will be allocated to the same Force.

[handwritten]

Yours sincerely

(sgd) Percy W. Nelles

Vice Admiral, R.C.N.
Senior Canadian Flag Officer (Overseas)

The Hon. Angus L. Macdonald,
Minister of National Defence for
Naval Services,

Ottawa, Canada.

[handwritten]

In accordance with my request orders have been given I am informed, for "W" to be moved to Plymouth

(sgd) P.W.N.

Hitler's "COMMANDO ORDER"

The Führer

No.003830/42 g.Kdos.OWK/Wst

SECRET

F.H. Qu.18.10.1942

12 copies

Copy No.12.

1. For a long time now our opponents have been employing in their conduct of the war, methods which contravene the International Convention of Geneva. The members of the so-called Commandos behave in a particularly brutal and underhand manner; and it has been established that those units recruit criminals not only from their own country but even former convicts set free in enemy territories. From captured orders it emerges that they are instructed not only to tie up prisoners, but also to kill out-of-hand unarmed captives who they think might prove an encumbrance to them, or hinder them in successfully carrying out their aims. Orders have indeed been found in which the killing of prisoners has positively been demanded of them.

2. In this connection it has already been notified in an Appendix to Army Orders of 7.10.1942. that in future, Germany will adopt the same methods against these Sabotage units of the British and their Allies; i.e. that, whenever they may appear, they shall be ruthlessly destroyed by the German troops.

3. I order, therefore:-

From now on all men operating against German troops in so-called Commando raids in Europe or in Africa, are to be annihilated to the last man. This is to be carried out whether they be soldiers in uniform, or saboteurs, with or without arms; and whether fighting or seeking to escape; and it is equally immaterial whether they come into action from Ships and Aircraft, or whether they land by parachute. Even if these individuals on discovery make obvious their intention of giving themselves up as prisoners, no pardon is on any account to be given. On this matter a report is to be made in each case to Headquarters for the information of Higher Command.

4. Should individual members of these Commandos, such as agents, saboteurs, etc., fall into the hands of the Armed Forces through any other means - as, for example, through the Police in one of the Occupied Territories - they are to be instantly handed over to the S.D.

To hold them in military custody - for example in P.O.W. Camps, etc., - even if only as a temporary measure, is strictly forbidden.

5. This order does not apply to the treatment of those enemy soldiers who are taken prisoner or give themselves up in open battle, in the course of normal operations, large scale attacks; or in major assault landings or airborne operations. Neither does it apply to those who fall into our hands after a sea fight, nor to those enemy soldiers who, after air battle, seek to save their lives by parachute.

6. I will hold all Commanders and Officers responsible under Military Law for any omission to carry out this order, whether by failure in their duty to instruct their units accordingly, or if they themselves act contrary to it.

(Sgd) A. Hitler

Cited on pp.159-160 in Messenger, Charles. The Commandos[:] 1940-1946. London: William Kimber, 1985.

CANADIAN NEWSPAPER COVERAGE

Based on two separate Department of National Defence press releases, at least fifteen Canadian newspapers carried feature stories regarding RCN Beach Commando "W" in their editions published respectively on or about April 22 and on or about August 12, 1944. In addition some thirty others ran one or other of the two stories, the April ones describing the Commando's training in Scotland and those of August its Normandy operations.

1. The following version of the April story appeared in the only Canadian francophone newspaper found covering it.

Le Droit, Ottawa, samedi, 22 avril 1944, 1ère page.

Commandos de la marine canadienne prêts à l'action.

UN PORT DU ROYAUME UNI, le 22. — (Spécial) —

Sous la tutelle de la Marine royale un groupe d'officiers et d'hommes d'équipage de la Marine royale canadienne, tous des volontaires, ont terminé leur d'entraînement de commandos. Ils sont le premier groupe de Canadiens [sic] à suivre ce cours de la Marine royale.

De leur centre d'entraînement, en Ecosse, ils ont été envoyés à un centre d'entraînement d'opérations combinées où ils travaillent avec des unités de l'Armée canadienne à bord de vaisseaux de débarquement. Ils seront attachés aux troupes de débarquement de l'Armée.

Un commando naval se distingue beaucoup d'un commando de l'Armée. Ce dernier est un spécialiste dans les combats armés et non armés; il est entraîné à se battre n'importe où et n'importe comment. Il est en de même du commando naval excepté qu'il ne quitte pas la tête de plage.

Les commandos navals débarquent avec les premières troupes et dirigent le reste de l'assaut. Pendant l'invasion, ils organisent la tête de plage en coopération étroite avec l'officier naval en charge du débarquement qui se tient au large avec les flotilles d'invasion. Puis, après avoir contrôlé les opérations sur la plage, ils y dirigent le trafic jusqu'à ce... [suite à la page treize]... qu'on trouve un port plus approprié au débarquement.

Ces marins canadiens sont prêts à tout: à vivre des jours et des jours sous le feu ennemi; à se nourrir de peu pendant des jours; à combattre et surtout à tenir.

C'est pourquoi, ici, en Ecosse, un dur d'entraînement les rend batailleurs et confiants en leurs forces. En effet, en Ecosse, le commando naval a appris à accoster son chaland de débarquement, à organiser la circulation et la défense de la plage selon les règles et à manoeuvrer toutes les catégories d'armes légères.

Ici, en Ecosse, dans l'un des plus beaux paysages du monde, les commandos de la Marine canadienne se sont exercés à disposer de leur ennemi doucement en silence dans des combats son [sic] armés. Au cours d'expéditions de plusieurs jours ils ont dormi à la belle étoile, ont fait leur propre cuisine et ont pris d'assaut des places fortes.

Les courses à obstacles ne leur offrent plus de surprise et leur initiative leur permet de traverser avec des moyens de fortune des rivières et des marais sous le feu ennemi le plus intense.

Ils sont fiers de porter l'insigne de leur métier sur leurs deux manches. Une insigne noire sur laquelle une ancre surmontée d'un aigle se détache en rouge. Une carabine traverse la verge de l'ancre. Au-dessus de cet insigne est écrit le mot "Canada" et un peu plus haut encore le mot "Commando". [N.B. Dans la phrase précédente, les mots "Canada" et "Commando" devraient échangés]

"Ces gars auront un rôle important à jouer dans l'invasion," déclare le lieutenant-commandant O'Hagan. "Ils tiendront la plage sur laquelle nos troupes et les matériaux de guerre seront débarqués. Ils seront de véritables officiers de port combattants."

2. Although no account of the August story has been found in the francophone press, three newspapers gave it not insignificant coverage, viz.:

- a). Le Droit, Hull, samedi, 12 août, 1944 [première page, col.1-2].
(Consists of four captioned pictures)
- b). La Presse, Montreal, samedi, 12 août, 1944 [première page, col.4-6].
(Consists of single captioned picture under heading "La Police de la Côte d'Invasion")
- c). Le Soleil, Quebec, lundi, 14 août, 1944 [page neuf, col.3-5]. (Consists of single captioned picture under heading "LES COMMANDOS DE LA MARINE")

3. Representative of the anglophone newspapers which allotted major space to the April story was that carried on pages 1 & 4 in The Montreal Daily Herald for Saturday, April 22, 1944, which includes six captioned pictures on the first page.

Navy Commandos Train For Invasion

Training is Complete for Toughest Job.

A United Kingdom Post — Amidst the rugged loveliness of Scottish hills a group of Royal Canadian Navy officers and ratings, all of them volunteers, have completed training under Royal Navy tutelage for one of the toughest jobs the Navy has to offer. Now that their course is completed, they are Commandos, the first Canadians to take the Royal Navy's course as a group.

From their training centre in Scotland, these leather-tough Canadians have moved into a Combined Training Centre where they are working with units of the Canadian Army on landing craft flotillas. They are participating in Army manoeuvres and will be attached to Army beach troops, ready and hardened for the "Big Show".

A Navy Commando differs from an Army Commando. The Army Commando is a specialist in fighting with the hand-to-hand variety preferred; he fights anywhere. The Navy Commando dotes on fighting too, but he never leaves the beach which has been chosen for an assault landing. Rather, he defies the enemy to drive him from the beach.

The Naval Commando lands with the first wave of attacking troops and signals the remainder of the assault in. He helps to organize the beach for the landing of troops and material-bearing craft. It is his job, during an invasion, to work on the beach in close contact with the Naval officer who is in charge of the landing and who is standing off-shore with the assault flotillas. When the beachhead is established, he controls the traffic into and through the beach until a more suitable port for handling the incoming traffic is available.

The Canadian Navy "tough type" must be ready for anything. He must be prepared to spend days on a beach under enemy fire. He must learn to live on scanty rations and thrive on them. He must be prepared to fight and fight superlatively well to hold the beach on which he has been landed.

That's why the training he took at this centre in Scotland was aimed at making him tough, scrappy and self-reliant. He learned how to beach his landing craft correctly, how to organize a beach in Navy fashion, and how to handle all types of light weapons.

"He is a solider and a sailor too," says Lieutenant-Commander Dennis O'Hagan, R.C.N.V.R., of Halifax, N.S., principal Beach Master, who wears the George Medal and Bar for bravery on special duty. "The Commando receives a great deal of army training which ordinary sailors do not get and he learns to make himself comfortable almost any place and under almost any conditions."

Here in Scotland, amidst some of the loveliest scenery in the world, the Canadian Navy Commando has learned to kill swiftly and silently in unarmed combat classes. He has gone on days-long exercises under full kit: he has slept and cooked his meals in the open and was ready at the end of the gruelling manoeuvre to take prepared positions by assault. He still is.

He has smashed his way through obstacle courses and negotiated tough water hazards with powder and thunder flashes bursting around him and live ammunition cracking like a great whip lash over his head. He is now prepared to get soaked to the skin like a Spaniel and to work and fight that way for days on end if need be. He soon turned into a very tough guy.

The Canadian Navy Commando has learned to wear with pride the badge of his "trade" on both arms, a black flash and on it, in red, an anchor surmounted by a stooping eagle with a light machine gun crossing the anchor shank. Above the patch is the word "Canada" and above that again, "Commando." [N.B. In the preceding sentence, the words "Canada" and "Commando" should, in fact, be interchanged]

"These boys will have a big part to play in the coming invasion," says Lieutenant-Commander O'Hagan. "They will be the fighting handy-men on the beaches through which our troops and material will pour. They are fighting harbor masters, really."

MONTREAL, SATURDAY, APRIL 22, 1944

Tough, Eager Naval Commandos Await Invasion Order

Will Fight With Army Troops on Europe's Beaches

A UNITED KINGDOM PORT, April 22 — (Star Special) — Amidst the rugged loveliness of Scottish hills, a group of Royal Canadian Navy officers and ratings, all of them volunteers, have completed training under Royal Navy tutelage for one of the toughest jobs the Navy has to offer. Now that their course is completed, they are Commandos, the first Canadians to take the Royal Navy's Commando course as a group.

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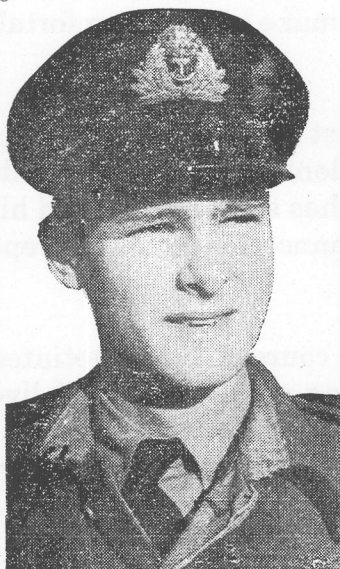
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HE has smashed his way through obstacle courses and negotiated tough water hazards with powder and thunder flashes bursting around him and live ammunition cracking like a great whip lash over his head. He is



NAVY COMMANDO: Lt. Gault Finley, of Montreal, who won his commission from the lower deck, is one of the Navy Commandos set to take part in the "big show" when it begins.



GETTING READY: Already veterans of the war at sea, these picked tars are putting finishing touches on their tough training to serve beside beach troops when the western front is opened.



PERSONAL COMBAT: Under the watchful eyes of a Royal Navy instructor, at the far end of the combatants, men detached from other duties of the Royal Canadian Navy, above, work out at personal combat with vicious knives at a training school in Scotland. Right above, Ordinary Seaman Frank Albrechtson, of Montreal, shows how to incapacitate an opponent in unarmed combat.

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Able Seaman Russel Nelson



Able Seaman Bill Burden

TOUGH AND READY: Seaman Burden, of Montreal, has been in the Navy a year and a half. Twelve months of the time he has served in landing craft and since then he has been getting ready to push ashore from those craft and meet the enemy face to face. Seaman Nelson, another Montrealeur, has been in blue for two years. 18 months with landing craft. He too is ready for one of the toughest jobs the service can deal out.

CANADIAN NAVAL COMMANDOS IN TRAINING FOR THE 'BIG SHOW'



R.C.N. Photos by L. G. MURPHY, R.C.N.V.R.

Commandos of the Royal Canadian Navy will be side by side with beach troops of the army when the Allied invasion of Western Europe gets underway. The first group of these commandos has just completed the Royal Navy course at a training centre in Scotland and are now fit and ready for one of the toughest jobs the naval service can offer.

UPPER LEFT—Canadian Commandos pile out of a landing craft onto their beach objective in a dawn offensive. The beach landing was the opening curtain for a two-day exercise under full pack which took the Commandos far into the Scottish hills and ended with an assault on prepared positions.

UPPER RIGHT—OS. FRANK ALBRECHTSON, R.C.N.V.R., of Montreal, demonstrates how to incapacitate an opponent during unarmed combat classes. His victim is OS. H. D. SMITH, of Toronto.

LOWER RIGHT—LT. GAULT FINLEY, R.C.N.V.R., of Montreal, has been in the Royal Canadian Navy for three years. He earned his commission by way of the lower deck and finished King's College in May, 1943. He has seen service at sea in corvettes, minesweepers and M.L.'s.

LOWER CENTRE—AB. RUSSELL NELSON, R.C.N.V.R., of Montreal. Of two years in the navy he has spent 18 months in landing craft in United Kingdom and six months with the Commandos.

LOWER LEFT—AB. EARL JACKSON, R.C.N.V.R., of Kingston, has served one year on the H.M. C.S. Elk, a converted yacht, before joining the new unit.

EXTREME LOWER RIGHT—At the conclusion of the manoeuvres, AB. RONALD BARNES of Vancouver, lights PO. DOUGLAS MCINTYRE'S cigaret. The latter is from Sherbrooke, Que. In the background stand AB. DOUGLAS KENNEDY of Detroit, left and AB. BILL BURDEN of Montreal.

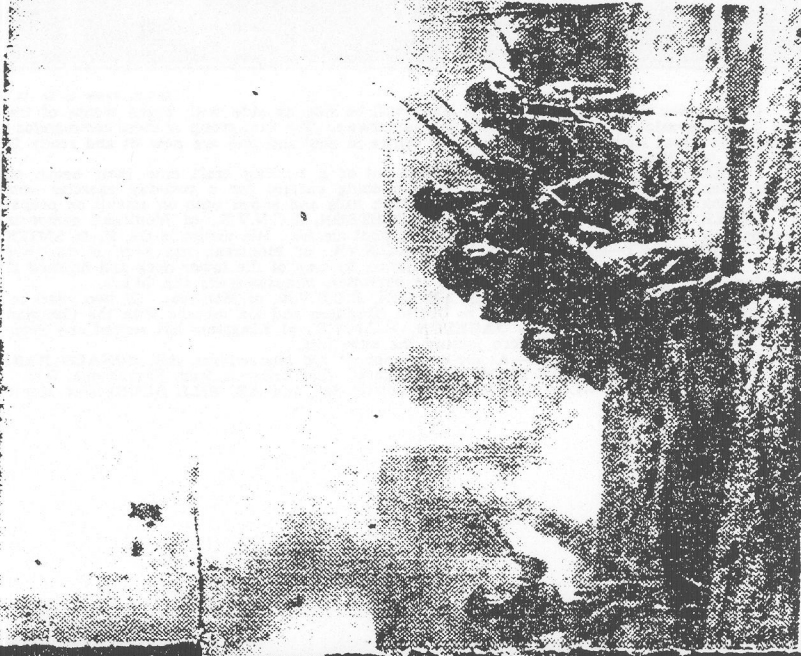
The Globe and Mail

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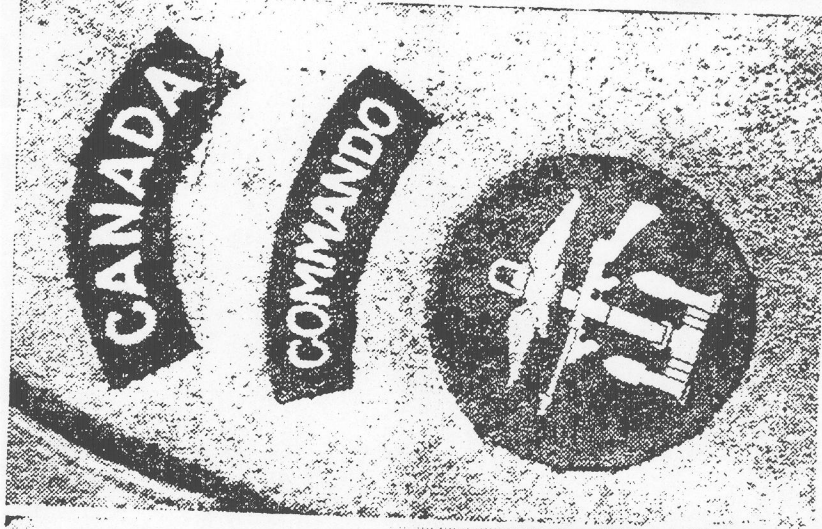
TORONTO, SATURDAY, APRIL 22, 1944.

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Navy Commandos 'Train Tough' to Seize and Hold Invasion Beaches



First group of Canadians to complete Royal Navy commando training are seen in training (left) in Scotland, charging through simulated mines and booby traps, while heavy powder charges explode around



them. Badge (middle) combines eagle, anchor and light machine gun and is worn on both arms. Silent kill is demonstrated by OD. Frank Albrechtson of Montreal (on OD, H. D. Smith of Toronto.

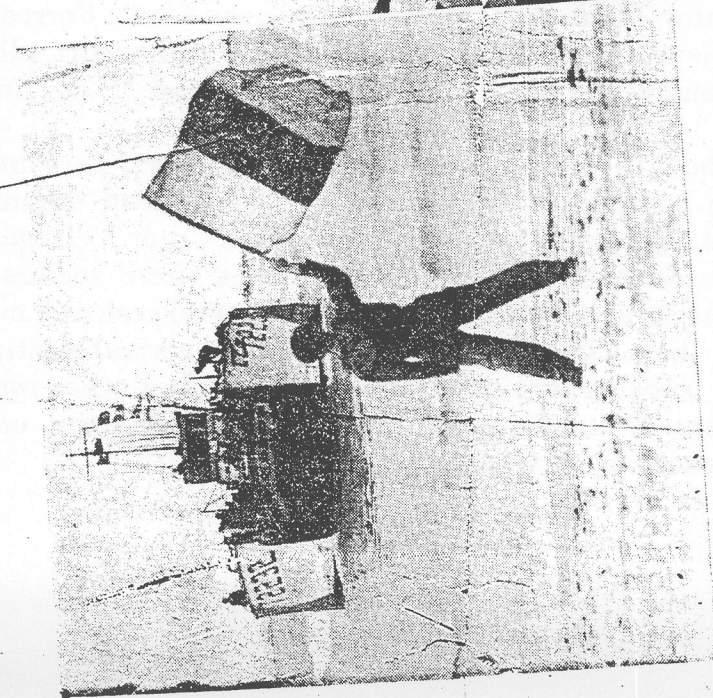


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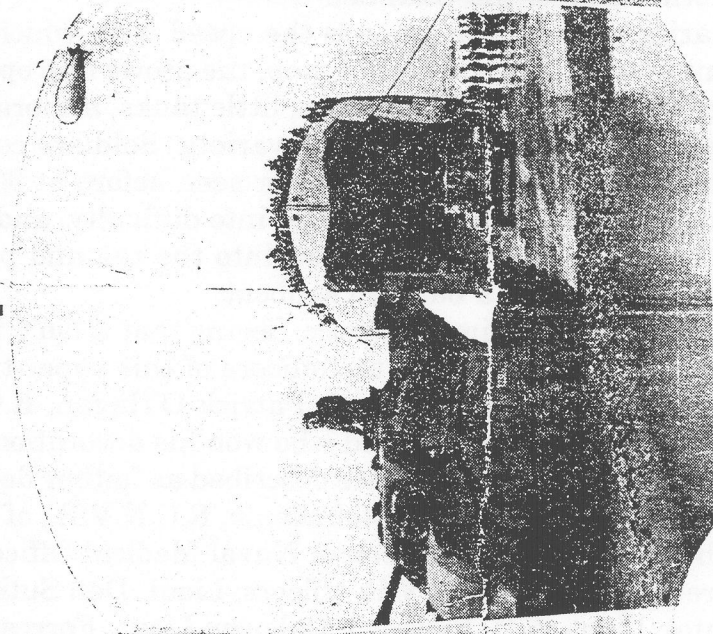
to Cut Purchases

OTTAWA POLICY Winning War Main Aim

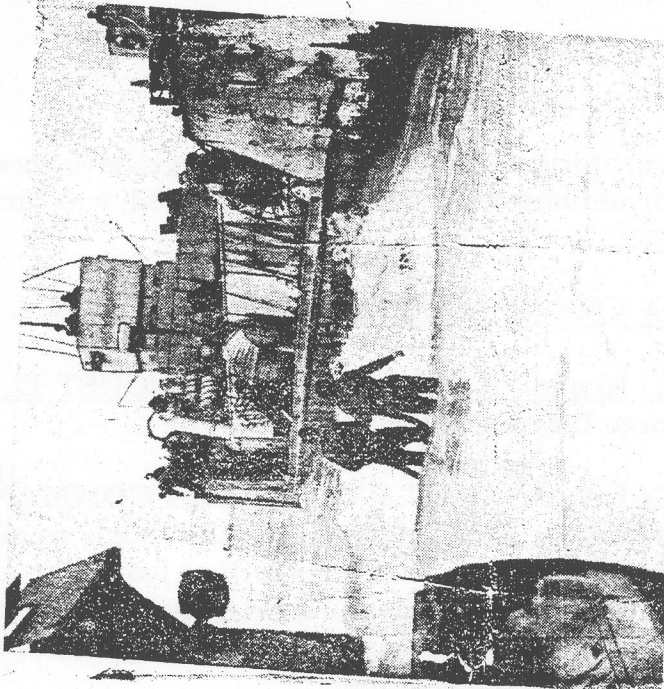
RCN Beach Commandos Do Superb Job Making Invasion "Go"



Beaching instructions are being passed to an approaching ship by this Royal Canadian Navy Beach Commando. This is part of their job of regulating invasion traffic and helping unload supplies for the fighting front.



A mighty Churchill tank rolls onto the beach as a second vehicle emerges from the landing craft. Fully-equipped troops crowd the forward part of the ship's deck as they await their turn to disembark.



Two Commandos plunge into the surf carrying a line to the stern of a vessel in danger of drifting and breaking up. The other end of the line is held by a 20-ton, tank-like beach machine that has no trouble steadying the ship.

4. The following story, written by Lt.Cdr. George Lawrence, RCNVR and issued by NSHQ (Information Section) on August 12, 1944, was carried in several Canadian newspapers.

ROYAL CANADIAN NAVY PRESS RELEASE

RELEASE DATE: 10 a.m., E.D.T., SATURDAY AUGUST 12, 1944

By Lieut.Cdr. George Lawrence, R.C.N.V.R.

WITH THE ROYAL CANADIAN NAVY BEACH COMMANDOS IN FRANCE

Along these sloping sands a bunch of very tough young Canadians preside as traffic cops and trouble shooters over a scene that looks like a Buck Rogers dream.

Their job is to beach the ships and bring ashore and put together the jig-saw puzzle that is the thousands of men and thousands of pieces of equipment cut apart and loaded on the other side of the Channel.

The amazing part of this scene is the speed with which everything moves. Big ships with blunt prows come sliding to a stop, the prows flap open and the armor of war literally belches forth -- huge cruiser tanks, little tanks, armored cars, scout cars, jeeps, transports, ambulances -- a never ending variety. Soldiers come ashore in transport trucks that whip off a beach they have never seen before at 30 miles an hour.

In the midst of all this a few ships get into difficulty, and the great 20 and 30 ton monsters which are snorting about wallow into the sea and push them around like a child changing the course of a bathtub sailboat.

The beach looks, sometimes, chaotic. Seeing that it isn't, is the beach commando's job. And first responsibility falls on the officers of this super-trained lot.

In charge is Lieut. Cdr. Dennis J. Patrick O'Hagan, R.C.N.V.R., George Medal and Bar, whose home is in Halifax, and who won his decorations as one of the originals of a group of mine-disposal officers since described as "either decorated or dead". Second in charge is Lieut. Cmdr. R.J. "Dick" Johnstone, R.C.N.V.R., of Regina, brother of Surg. Capt. D.W. Johnstone, R.C.N.V.R., Senior Naval Medical Officer on the Atlantic Coast. Under them are nine other R.C.N.V.R. officers: Lieut. Don Sutherland, 340 Main St., N. Weston, (Toronto); Lieut. A.D. Rayburn, Calgary; Lieut. Forrest Angus, Victoria; Lieut. E.G. Finley, Lieut. G. Hampson, and Lieut. J. Vaillancourt, all of Montreal; Lieut. J.B. Cronin, Vancouver; Lieut. C.B. Christie, Amherst, N.S.; and Lieut. Jack Bentley, Saskatoon.

Here's how they bring your army and air force personnel and their equipment ashore on the beaches of France, for each beachhead organization is similar. Each beachhead has a principal beachmaster -- Lieut. Cmdr. O'Hagan here; he has a deputy -- Lieut. Cmdr. Johnstone. The beachhead has three sectors under beachmasters -- Rayburn, Sutherland and Angus -- and the other officers and men are divided into three parties under them. The ships lay off shore on arrival waiting instructions that are based on tide, weather, enemy action, and a score of other reasons. Once ashore their cargo of humans or supplies goes out by three main exits, one for personnel, one for wheeled and another for tracked vehicles.

It sounds simple, but it isn't. Take, for instance, the day our beachhead was narrowed by enemy minefields. There was an urgent demand for certain supplies anchored offshore. There was a choppy sea and a crosswind. The ships had to be laid side by side, dangerously close, their bows on the beach and their stern held only by the kedge anchor they drop just before they hit the shore.

Suddenly the stern anchor cable on one broke. In a moment it was drifting to a crash with the craft alongside. Then there roared into action a 20-ton armour-plated water-sealed monster with a snub bumper nose. It plunged into the sea, met the ship coming round, and calmly proceeded to push it back to sea again. "The crew were all leaning over the side, and the officers, waiting for the crash", chuckled Petty Officer Douglas MacIntyre of Sherbrooke, Que. "Brother, you should have seen the look on their faces when we started pushing them around!"

Sometimes the tossing of the sea jams heavy tanks in the holds of the landing ships. Then through the yawning bow mouth of the long ship is run a wire cable, and a beach engine on the sandy shore digs in its tracks and tugs, for all the world like a little bulldog that has a line down the gullet of some sea monster. By sheer force the tanks are freed. Sometimes a vehicle will bog down. And if it isn't convenient to pull it out, there's a huge crane that will amble over and quietly lift it out and set it down somewhere else.

They have a return traffic, too. A different kind of traffic, and they're always looking for one of those friends they greeted coming in -- and this, the wounded, is the harsh cut in an exhilarating job of action. They bring them down in ambulances each evening. They come from all near-by fronts, and you'll find men of many nations among them -- French patriots and civilians, German wounded, a few Poles, Czechs, Dutch, Belgians -- they've been conscripted into Hitler's labor corps and abandoned by the ruthless Hun.

They load the stretchers on ducks. The duck is a big flat-bottomed car which floats and has a propellor and a rudder. It runs smoothly across the beach, noses into the water and up the great ramps of tank-landing ships.

Then there are the prisoners. They come down in the evening, too, in a great herd of greenish-grey uniforms -- always an intensely interesting study in human reactions; some furtive and afraid; some boldly arrogant; some disinterested, their thoughts obviously far away, in a spot called home; some frankly curious. Most of them are very old or very young. Like all other traffic on this busy beach they don't linger long -- they go aboard a ship and the beach commandos go on to other things.

The merry young Canadian beach commandos eat bully beef and canned stew and sling their hammocks at night in a vaunted west wall fort from which Germans peered across the channel for three years.

They haven't even bothered to move the field gun whose snout sticks out in the seaward end of the huge steel and concrete box which the Hun built into a sandy bluff. In fact some of the lads use the gun carriage to sling hammocks, and hook the other end of the "mick" into the steel reinforcement girders bared of their concrete by Canadian tank shells still buried where they struck.

They take the long way around the bluff above the fort because there's a sign on the top which says -- with a huge skull and crossbones in the centre -- "Achtung! Minen!" That means, they explain, that there are plenty of minefields about, but that the Germans were ousted so swiftly they didn't have time to remove the warning signs placed for their own troops and the civilian population. So it is perfectly safe.

Not all of the boys were lucky enough to find themselves west wall forts to live in, and the result has been an assorted group of tents, dugouts and hastily constructed kitchens which look very much like a 'hoboes' shacktown. For from the moment they landed on the beach the commandos had to fend for themselves -- they had to find their own places to cook, eat, sleep and relax in their spare time.

Lieut. A.D. Rayburn of Winnipeg was one of the luckiest. He found a tiny German dugout lined with foot-thick concrete. Three other officers counted a barrage balloon brought down and irreparably damaged by flak a stroke of luck -- and made a very fine tent out of it. They are Lieutenants Don Sutherland of Toronto, Forrest Angus of Victoria, and C.B. Christie of Amherst, N.S.

Two French-Canadian lads have a subterranean retreat that is fitted out palatially -- if you can overlook the bare sand walls and floor. They have made shelves and niches, have "scrounged" comfortable beds, and salvaged abandoned life jackets from the beaches to make air pillows. They are A.B. Paul de Montigny and A.B. Lucien Quesnel of Montreal. Montigny, who is a bit tall, has dug out a bit of extra foot room out of the wall at the end of his bed.

A.B. Reg. Burse of Hamilton, Ontario, constructed himself a dugout of solitary grandeur and named it "Little Hamilton". Four other lads have a shack of some proportions, built with pieces of broken boats and wrecked vehicles, which is dubbed "Canada House".

"It is just like being on a holiday," says Commando Joseph Adams of Belleville, Ontario, "We're all having the time of our lives -- a glorified camping trip. Except I'm the cook!"

Food, Adams points out, makes or breaks a camp. And so every member of the group has become an unofficial "scrounger" to vary the monotony of the otherwise very excellent "Compo" rations -- all tinned food, stew, soup, canned puddings, and so on. Usually extra food comes from the galleys of ships coming in to the beachhead, whose officers realize the conditions ashore are rather primitive. Fresh bread and fresh meat are "prizes beyond compare".

The commandos have no cook. "Somebody just gets browned off", Adams explains, "and I'm it." Every member of the unit, however, has been trained how to make a tasty meal -- if necessary out of limited rations, and anyone may be called upon to take a turn in the galley. Sharing the galley duties with Adams are A.B. Joseph Roy, Moncton; A.B. John Ross, Owen Sound; A.B. George Stone, Winnipeg; A.B. Harold Steele, Tamworth, Ontario; and A.B. John Jones of Picton, Ontario.

It is strictly an outdoor life, and the amazing sight of a hotly-contested football or softball game on the hard beach sands, among the huge beached transports, has become commonplace. For these super-trained commandos, whose average age is about 21, have a lot of energy to work off. That department comes under Petty Officer Douglas McIntyre of Sherbrooke, Que., navy physical training instructor.

"Even though the lads have a lot of work to do they've also got to keep themselves in shape", he says. "So we give them livening up exercises to keep them sharp, and exercise to keep their muscles hard. They have softball, volleyball, football, swimming, boxing and wrestling. And believe me, they are tough and healthy lads!"

Which brings them back to Adams for something to eat. "I know they're tough and healthy", he mutters, "You can't ever fill them!"

BIOGRAPHETTES

The hundred and three names which appear below constitute all those who officially served at one time or another in RCN Beach Commando "W". The information shown for each name has been obtained from four main sources:

1. National Archives of Canada military records, 1942-45;
2. Some six dozen Canadian newspapers, 1942-1945;
3. Communications since 1988 (via such means as letters, oral conversations, telephone calls) with particular individual, his next-of-kin, and/or third parties.
4. Author's personal letters written home, 1943-45.

If an individual(or next-of-kin)'s address was known, a copy of the proposed biographical sketch was mailed to them in the summer of 1993 for amendment and approval.

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1. **ADAMS, Joseph Patrick ("Joe").** V.31229. A/LS. W-2. Born in Belleville, Ont., July 11, 1924. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944. Postwar worked at Northern Telecom for almost thirty years, taking early retirement in 1981 due to physical disability. Married Audrey Tebworth in 1949 and as of 1992 they had two grandchildren by their daughter (and only child).
2. **ALBRECHTSON, Francis Conrad ("Frank").** V.61185. A/AB. W-1. Born in Montreal, May 24, 1924. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944. Postwar worked for twenty-seven years at Northern Telecom, retiring in 1971 as production manager at the Point St. Charles plant in Montreal. Moved to Laurentians, and as of 1993 lives in St. Sauveur, P.Q.. Former vice-president & service officer, Branch 171, Royal Canadian Legion, Morin Heights, P.Q., for whose "museum" he has been largely responsible over the years in acquiring a sizable collection of Canadian Army regimental badges. Has two sons and two daughters.
3. **ALLEN, J.** V.49877. A/AB. W-1. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944.
4. **ANGUS, Forrest ("Forrie").** O-2340. Lt. Beachmaster, W-3. Born in Victoria, August 9, 1919; deceased September 22, 1991. Before December 1943 appointment as Assistant Beachmaster for W-3, had been in corvette HMCS Cobalt. Replaced Lt. Hatch at the end of May 1944 as Beachmaster, W-3. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22. Prior to January 16, 1946 demobilization, was Asdic officer aboard corvette HMCS Smiths Falls. Four brothers also enlisted in RCNVR. Married Patricia ("Patsy") Beard of Victoria on May 31, 1947: three sons and six grandchildren. Worked thirty years in his family's West Coast automotive engines and parts business. After 1975 retirement, "bought a boat and enjoyed cruising on the Coast." As part of the subsequent purchase of some recreational property came an old Land-Rover, prompting him to relive and retell several 1943-44 driving escapades, including the week he and Lt. Rayburn (BM, W-2) spent touring around England in the jeep they had commandeered in Normandy and managed to bring back to the UK, visiting old friends and out-of-the-way places, eventually landing up in Ardentinnny, Scotland where, because "Benghazi Bill" (CO, HMS Armadillo) declined to accept the jeep as a gift, they were finally obliged to simply abandon it. In postwar years, became member of and generously supported the Royal Naval Commando Association.
5. **ARMSTRONG, C.** V.61150. OD. W-? Drafted from "W" in March 1944.

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6. **BARNES, Ronald V.** V.47862. AB. W-2. Home town -- Vancouver. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944.
7. **BECKMAN, K.** V.65150. OD. W-? Drafted from "W" in March 1944.
8. **BENTLEY, Jack ("Bangalore").** O-6020. Lt. Administration & Stores officer. Born about 1910 in Saskatoon. Served in Normandy, July 16 to August 22, 1944. Prior to his demobilization on August 31, 1945, saw service in frigate, HMCS Cap-de-la-Madeleine. Postwar rejoined Sherwin Williams Paints as one of their Ontario region sales representatives.
9. **BURDEN, William A. ("Bill").** V.43750. AB. W-2. Home town -- Montreal. Prior to joining "W" in November 1943, served on landing craft in Mediterranean. Drafted from "W" in June, 1944.
10. **BURSE, Reginald Clarence ("Reg").** V.48280. A/AB. W-1. Born in Burlington, Ont., August 19, 1922 and died there on November first, 1993. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944. 1947-82 with Procter & Gamble in Hamilton. Married Catherine Mary DeMonines ("Kay") in December 1945 and since 1946 they have lived in Burlington.
11. **BYER, Cecil.** V.54476. A/AB. W-3. Home town -- Vancouver. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944.
12. **BYERS, H.** V.34795. AB. W-3. Returned to landing craft prior to June 6, 1944 Normandy invasion.
13. **CALER, J.** V.46031. AB. W-3. Home town -- Halifax. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944.
14. **CAMPBELL, Louis Oliver ("Ollie").** O-11800. Lt. Beachmaster, W-3. Left "W" early in 1944 for duty at Portsmouth as Canadian Liaison officer to Force "J". Following demobilization in October 1945, at some point he did publicity work for the Saskatchewan Government, working out of Regina. Subsequently returned to his native province of Quebec where he died around 1989.
15. **CASBOURNE, James Clifton ("Molson").** V.56832. A/AB. W-1. Born in Lachine, P.Q., August 25, 1923. Served in Normandy, July 13 to August 22, 1944. Retired from Dominion Engineering Works, Lachine, in 1984 after forty-one years as a pipe fitter. Married Violet Wood (1919-1992) on August

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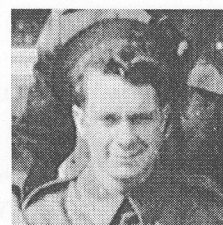
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11, 1945. One son, Tom, and two grandchildren.

16. **CHRISTIE, Charles Black ("Charlie").** O-13770. Lt. Assistant Beachmaster, W-2. Born in Amherst, N.S. in 1912 and died there on August 1, 1993. Prior to his July 7, 1944 appointment to "W" as replacement for Lt. J.R. Cunningham, had been "guns" aboard HMCS Teme which, a few days after D-DAY, lost several crew members on being almost cut in half by an RN escort carrier in the Bay of Biscay. While serving in Normandy (July 7 to August 22, 1944), happened to run across his brother Hugh, an RCAMC doctor with the Winnipeg Rifles. Upon "W"'s disbandment, was appointed to frigate HMCS Ribble which shortly afterwards sank a German U-Boat off Land's End. In 1945 had a full naval wedding ceremony, marrying RCN Nursing Sister Thelma Victoria Grose who was born near Fergus, Ont., grew up in Swift Current, Sask., graduated from the Toronto General, and during the war served in three RCN hospitals. Back on "civvy street", Charlie worked in and eventually ran the family luggage and coffin business, selling it off and retiring around 1970. They raised two sons and, as of 1994, Thelma lives in Amherst.
17. **CRONIN, John Bernard ("Jack").** O-16890. A/Lt. Assistant Beachmaster, W-3. Home town -- Saskatoon. Prior to joining "W" in May 1944, was 1st Lt., LCI(L) #250. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944. Canadian Naval Lists show him subsequently aboard the corvette HMCS Thorlock from October 25 to December 20, on strength of HMCS Scotian and then HMCS Cornwallis during the first half of 1945, and finally demobilized as of July 18.
18. **CRONKHITE, Winston F. ("Frank").** V.61557. AB. W-2. Born in Fredericton, September 24, 1924. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944. After discharge from RCNVR, took upholstery course in Moncton and eventually, under the name of Cronkhite Upholsterers, ran his own business on Yonge Street in Toronto. Deceased in 1988. His widow, Virginia, who came from Woodstock, N.B., lives (as of 1993) in Thornhill, Ont..
19. **CROUGH, Raymond ("Mother").** V.19467. AB. W-1. Home town -- in Western Canada. Drafted to General Service in mid-July 1944.
20. **CROWHURST, Kenneth Guy ("Tarzan" or "Crow").** O-17120. Lt. Born in Chapleau, Ont., November 5, 1918. Joined Army in 1940. After 6-month A/S course in 1941, transferred to Navy and served in HMCS Swift Current and HMCS Kamloops as asdic operator. Commissioned S/Lt. in 1942 and

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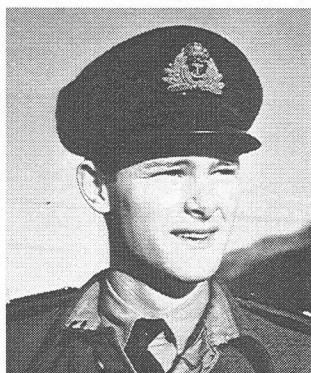
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promoted to Lt. the next year on being appointed Assistant Beachmaster of W-1. Shortly after D-Day, he became Beachmaster in charge of landing craft for LSI, HMCS Prince David, which later took part in Allied landings in Southern France, Albania, Greece, and Crete. Before his October 25, 1945 demobilization, spent five months in corvette HMCS Sudbury and earned WK (watchkeeping) certificate. As a 1949 university science graduate in forestry, his career divided into two phases -- a dozen years based in Auden as logging superintendent with Abitibi and then, from 1961-85, as a biology teacher at Hillcrest High School in Thunder Bay, Ont.. Married on April 24, 1943 to Margaret Helen Pearce of Redvers, Sask., they have three daughters and four grandchildren, and live in Thunder Bay. His retirement interests are "mostly hunting & fishing, camping, gardening, and calligraphy".

21. **CUNNINGHAM, John Ritchie ("Cut").** O-14270. Lt. Assistant Beachmaster, W-2. Home town -- Vancouver. Earned WK (watchkeeping) certificate after serving throughout 1942 in corvette HMCS Chambly and then six months in corvette HMCS Kincardine. Joined "W" at the end of June 1944 as replacement for Lt. R.I. Shales, ABM, W-2. Being himself replaced within a week by Lt. C.B. Christie, he subsequently went on to spend the better part of a year in Canadian MTBs. Following demobilization in September 1945, became a lawyer three years later and in 1990 was a partner at Campney & Murphy in Vancouver, practicing in all aspects of maritime law.
22. **DEMONTIGNY, Paul.** V.50928. AB. W-3. Home town -- Montreal. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944.
23. **DERUCHIE, L.** V.4365. AB. W-3. Home town -- Montreal. Served in Normandy, July 13 to August 22, 1944.
24. **DOWNEY, Vincent Joseph ("Vince").** V.57751. A/AB. W-2. Home town -- Hamilton. Hospitalized for hernia operation just before "W" proceeded to Normandy in July 1944.
25. **FAUBERT, Paul Louis.** V.44355. AB. W-2. Home town -- Montreal. Served in Normandy, July 13 to August 22, 1944.
26. **FINLEY, Eric Gault ("Skip").** O-23710. Lt. Assistant Beachmaster, W-1. Born in Montreal, January 14, 1923. Before December 1943 appointment to "W", earned WK (watchkeeping) certificate after fifteen months in minesweeper, fairmile, and corvette. Served in Normandy, July 16 to 26, 1944; air-evacuated to UK after receiving shrapnel head wound on July 23

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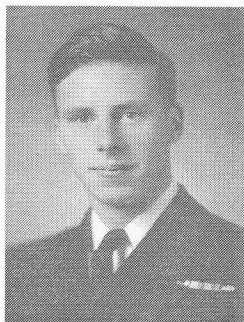
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near Bernières-sur-mer and being operated on at #6 MNSU near Bayeux. Discharged (medically unfit) in February 1945. Postwar career in education. Married Catherine Rae Hunter of Montreal on June 25, 1949. They have three daughters and one son, four grandchildren as of 1993, and live in Ottawa.

27. **FLEMMING, M.** V.42327. AB. W-3. Joined "W" in April 1944 as replacement for "assault course casualty" F.J. Gamblin, AB.
28. **FORSYTH, John Edward.** V.10963. A/LS. W-2. Home town -- Regina. Prior to joining "W" in November 1943, had been on landing craft. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944.
29. **FOX, John Lloyd ("Jack").** V.57307. A/AB. W-1. Born in Wallaceburg, Ont., on October 18, 1923 and died there on March 21, 1986. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944. After being demobilized on March 19, 1945, he worked in construction with his father John. Married to Marion Alberta Frewing, July 31, 1945, they had a daughter and two sons and six grandchildren.
30. **GAMBLIN, Frederick James ("Fred").** V.59716. AB. W-3. Born in Sussex, N.B., on July 27, 1924. Served in "W" from November 6, 1943 to April 10, 1944, at which time, having suffered a broken wrist while undergoing training on an assault course, he was replaced by M. Flemming, AB. Spent eight months patrolling English Channel in HMCS Moose Jaw prior to returning to Canada for discharge on November 5, 1945. Drove truck (1945-47) and bus (1947-53) before joining Saint John Fire Department, from which he retired as a Captain in 1988. Married to Mary Horncastle, September 23, 1950, they have two sons and two grandsons.
31. **GERMAINE, A.** V.38689. A/AB. W-3. Served in Normandy, July 13 to August 22, 1944.
32. **GOODWIN, Dennis Charles.** V.62012. AB. W-2. Born in Lorneville, N.S., March 16, 1925. Appointed to "W" six months after May 1943 enlistment. Drafted to HMCS Niobe prior to "W"'s July/August 1944 stint in Normandy. Served aboard HMCS Chaudière, a River Class destroyer, until being discharged in October 1945. He and his wife Roberta have two children and live in Moncton, N.B..
33. **GREENWOOD, D.** V.61245. A/AB. W-3. Served in Normandy, July 16 to August 22, 1944.

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34. **HAMPSON, Harold George.** O-30400. Lt. Assistant Beachmaster, W-2. Born in Montreal on December 2, 1922; died on January 23, 1992 in Ottawa. Prior to joining "W" in March 1944, had been on landing craft and with RN Beach Commando units in the Mediterranean, being "mentioned in despatches" for his part in extinguishing fires aboard an Allied freighter. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944. Following his January 1945 naval discharge ("medically unfit"), he earned a Master's degree in history at McGill University. Married Eve J. Osler of Montreal in September 1951, subsequently having two sons and a daughter, and, as of 1992, four grandchildren. Retired from the Federal Government in 1977 after a twenty-five year career, seventeen of them with External Affairs. During his post-war life, he became a keen and accomplished mountain-climber.
35. **HARDING, C.** V.61890. A/AB. W-3. Home town -- Montreal. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944.
36. **HARRINGTON, J.** V.16892. A/AB. W-3. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944.
37. **HATCH, Carr.** O-31610. Lt. Beachmaster, W-2. Home town -- Toronto. Prior to joining "W", earned WK (watchkeeping) certificate after serving ten months in destroyers (HMCS Niagara and HMCS Waskesiu). Initially W-2 BM, he took over W-3 on Lt. L.O. Campbell's departure from the Commando. Ordered at the end of May 1944 to report to CNMO in London, Hatch was appointed to Canadian MTB #460 in mid-June. On October 16 NSHQ accepted his resignation from the RCNVR.
38. **HAY, R.** V.45449. A/LS. W-3. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944.
39. **HILDRETH, C. ("Clem").** V.64412. A/AB. W-1. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944.
40. **HOREL, J.** V.45584. AB. W-3. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944.
41. **JACKSON, Earl.** V.44344. A/LS. W-3. Home town -- Kingston. Was in HMCS Elk, a converted yacht, before joining Commandos. Served in Normandy, July 13 to August 22, 1944.

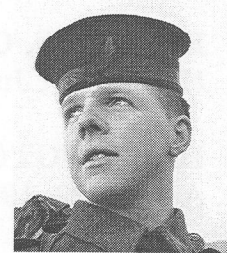
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42. **JARRETT, George.** A.2635. A/PO. W-1. Home town -- Toronto. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944.
43. **JOHNSTONE, Richard John ("Dick").** O-37140. A/Lt.Cr. Deputy Principal Beachmaster and Commanding Officer of "W". Born on June 4, 1912 in Regina where he worked prewar as a journalist. By 1940 he was a Lt. carrying out Naval Control Service duties in HMCS Protector at Sydney, N.S.. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944. When "W" disbanded, he was appointed Canadian Naval Liaison Officer at Milford Haven and, upon demobilization in September 1945, returned to general journalism in Western Canada. A long career writing for Imperial Oil ended with his 1977 retirement. He resides in Calgary.
44. **JONES, John ("Jack").** V.42208. AB. W-3. Home town -- Picton, Ont. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944.
45. **JONES, Robert.** V.841. A/LS. W-3. Home town -- Winnipeg. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944.
46. **JOYCE, John.** A.4140. A/LS. W-1. Home town -- Saint John. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944. Drowned some years after the end of the war in Bay of Fundy tugboat accident.
47. **JOYES, W.F.** V.17772. AB. W-3. Served in Normandy, July 16 to August 22, 1944.
48. **KENNEDY, Douglas.** V.41864. AB. W-2. Home town -- Detroit. Prior to joining "W" in November 1943, had been on landing craft. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944.
49. **KING, J.** V.51758. AB. W-3. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944.
50. **KNIGHT, N.** V.54536. AB. W-1. Joined "W" in June 1944 as replacement for G. Winn, AB. Served in Normandy, July 13 to August 22, 1944.
51. **KOCH, L.** V.51953. AB. W-3. Served in Normandy, July 13 to August 22, 1944.
52. **KROSHEWSKY, Daniel ("Dan").** V.64415. AB. W-2. Born in Calgary, November 23, 1925. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944. Ice-maker at HMCS Peregrine hockey arena in Halifax for 1944-45 winter

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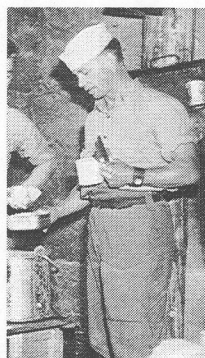
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season. Coxswain of HMCS Protector harbour defence craft for six months prior to November 21, 1945 discharge. During a 1946 visit to the United States he became drafted into the U.S. Army and subsequently graduated as a paratrooper at Fort Benning. From 1947 to 1980 worked for Imperial Oil (on drilling rigs, as refinery technician, and as shift supervisor). Married Vera Friedenberg of Leduc, Alberta on August 27, 1949; now live in Edmonton. They have a son and two daughters and, as of 1992, five grandchildren. In World War I his father spent three years overseas with the Canadian Expeditionary Force and saw action at Vimy Ridge. During World War II three brothers were wounded while serving with the Canadian Army in Italy; one was repatriated but the other two later also took part in the Northwest Europe campaign.

53. **LUFF, Charles R.** V.56817. AB. W-2. Served in Normandy, July 13 to August 22, 1944.
54. **MACBETH, John Kenneth ("Jack").** O-43440. Lt. Assistant Beachmaster, W-3. Born in Detroit in 1921, moving to Toronto at an early age; deceased on September 16, 1991. Spent eighteen months in HMCS Eyebright on North Atlantic convoy duty and earned a WK (watchkeeping) certificate prior to taking Long "n" (navigation course) and subsequently being appointed Assistant Squadron Officer for Canadian LCI(L)s in November 1943. The next month he transferred to "W" but, after injuring himself during training in May 1944, he reverted back to General Service and became navigating officer first in HMCS Trentonian and then in HMCS New Glasgow until his demobilization on August 13, 1945. Postwar career mainly in journalism (e.g. as AP correspondent covered the December 1950 U.S. Marines retreat from the Changjin Reservoir in Korea), Federal Government contracts (e.g. Executive assistant to the Honourable Judy Lemarsh when she was Secretary of State in the Trudeau Cabinet), and free lance writing (e.g. Ready, Aye, Ready: An Illustrated History of the Royal Canadian Navy, published in 1989 by Key Porter Books). His own favorite personal anecdote recounted a 1954 solo trip by jeep around the West coast of Africa dressed, when in Arab states, as an Arab. Hoping to eventually reach the Mediterranean Sea, his vehicle broke down completely in the middle of the Sahara Desert when he, his parrot, and his monkey were eventually rescued by some itinerant Bedouins. He fell in love with British Columbia and lived alone in rustic cabins far removed from the urban rat-race.
55. **MACDONALD, William Melville.** O-44030. Lt.Cr. Principal Beachmaster "W". Home town -- Montreal. Enlisted in 1940 and served in various Canadian shore establishments for more than three years before

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- being appointed RCN Beach Commando's PBM on November 20, 1943. Replaced in December 1943 by A/Lt.Cr. D.J.P. O'Hagan, his resignation from the RCNVR was accepted by NSHQ on February 29, 1944.
56. **MACINTYRE, Alfred P.** V.55697. AB. W-2. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944.
 57. **MADDEN, G.** V.24212. AB. W-3. Home town -- Winnipeg. Served in Normandy, July 16 to August 22, 1944.
 58. **MANTAIS, L.** V.60982. A/AB. W-3. Served in Normandy, July 13 to August 22, 1944.
 59. **McINTYRE, Douglas E.** V.5747. A/PO. W-2. Home town -- Sherbrooke, P.Q.. Served from July 13 to August 22, 1944 in Normandy where, whenever circumstances permitted, he directed "W"'s PT and recreational activities. Employed postwar for several years by British Columbia Department of Fisheries at Powell River. Married with a son and a daughter. Deceased in early 1980s; his widow Sandra lives on Savary Island, B.C..
 60. **MORRIS, Arthur Edward ("Art").** V.38938. OD. W-2. Home town -- Montreal. Prior to joining "W" in November 1943, had been on landing craft. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944.
 61. **MURPHY, Donald S.** V.2980. AB. W-3. Home town -- Fredericton. Joined "W" in June 1944 as replacement for H. Byers, AB. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944.
 62. **MURPHY, William Robert ("Bill" or "Spud").** V.5392. A/LS. W-2. Born in Port Arthur, Ont., March 11, 1920. Joined Naval Reserve in 1937. Active service commenced September 4, 1939 and two days later began a three and a half year stint in HMCS Saguenay. Appointed to "W" in November 1943 and served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944. Prior to his discharge on October 26, 1945, he spent ten weeks aboard HMCS Uganda. Married in Naval Chapel, HMCS Cornwallis, to Alice Ann Delaney (of Moncton) on February 3, 1945; now live in Verdun, P.Q.. They have three daughters and, as of 1992, two grandchildren. Enjoyed lengthy period of employment with Northern Telecom. Five brothers also saw service in RCNVR. Actively supports Montreal branch of veterans White Ensign association.
 63. **MURRAY, Harold ("Tiny").** V.19196. AB. W-1. Home town -- Sarnia, Ont.. Prior to joining "W" in June 1944 as replacement for J. Skinner, AB,

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had been on landing craft in Mediterranean. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944.

64. **NELSON, Russell Charles ("Russ").** V.38716. AB. W-2. Born in Montreal, November 2, 1924. Enlisted in July 1942 and spent about a year with RN and RCN landing craft in the Mediterranean before joining "W" at the end of 1943. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944. Employed as an auditor by Bell Canada for forty-two years, being stationed at one time in Saudi Arabia and Lebanon. Retirement came in 1987. Married Jean Lancaster of Montreal in 1959. They have a son and a daughter and live in Toronto.
65. **NEWELL, William ("Bill").** V.57709. A/AB. W-1. Home town -- Tillsonburg, Ont.. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944.
66. **OFFLESS, J.** V.37973. AB. W-2. Home town -- Brantford, Ont.. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944.
67. **O'HAGAN, Denis James Patrick.** O-56170. A/Lt.Cr., George Medal and bar. In December 1944 replaced W.M. Macdonald, Lt.Cr., as Principal Beachmaster, "W". Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944. Lived postwar in Halifax with wife Patricia. Managed Forsyth Men's Shop from at least 1953 to 1955, and was later employed as an inspector with the Provincial Department of Fisheries.
68. **PENDLEBURY, Arthur ("Art").** V.56436. A/AB. W-1. Came from Nova Scotia. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944.
69. **PETTY, Arthur Henry ("Art").** V.54229. AB. W-2. Born on April 27, 1925. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944. Employed variously in electrical field, service industry, and for a company dealing in china (dishes) replacement. Retired in 1990. Married Elizabeth ("Betty") in 1947; they have five daughters and live in Toronto.
70. ***PLATJOUW, Joseph ("Joe").** V.46327. A/LS. W-1. Born in Wallaceburg, Ont., March 31, 1922. Served as PBM's bodyguard in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944. Following 1945 discharge, worked for twenty-five years in various Canadian and American locations mainly as a die-caster, retiring in 1988. His wife died in 1989; they had no children. He lives in Greenville, Michigan, busies himself as a handyman, and maintains his membership in the Wallaceburg branch of the Royal Canadian Legion.
*(Some of his RCNVR records misspell his surname as PLAYTOUW).

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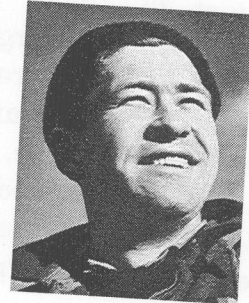


71. **QUESNEL, Joseph Louis Robert Lucien.** V.39610. AB. W-3. Born in Montreal, August 19, 1924. Had sea time experience in minesweeper HMCS Fundy before joining "W" in November 1943. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944. Spent several weeks aboard frigate HMCS Wentworth prior to his discharge on August 23, 1945. Entire career as postman. Lucille Morrison of Montreal, his first wife, died in 1974; they had one son. His second wife, Lillianne Jolicoeur Trudel, who had three children from a previous marriage, passed away in 1980. He subsequently married Ethel Miller Lewis, a widow with two children and they now live in Ste. Thérèse, P.Q.. For many years Lucien has been an active member and office holder in the Combined Operations sub-division of the Royal Canadian Naval Association.
72. **RAYBURN, A. Dudley.** O-61310. Lt. Beachmaster, W-2. Born around 1910 in Kidder, North Dakota, moving to Calgary as a youngster. Joined Canadian Naval Reserve in 1925. Training Officer in HMCS Chippawa (Winnipeg) for a year before appointment as BM for W-2 on December 1, 1943. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944. Spent nine months aboard frigate HMCS Sussexvale and earned a WK (watchkeeping) certificate prior to being demobilized as of September 25, 1945. Rejoined RCN(R) the following year as Staff Officer, Sea Cadets at HMCS Tecumseh (Calgary), and in 1949 became a Lt.Cdr.. After completing part of a 3-year Short Service Appointment, he was "honourably released" from the Navy on May 25, 1952.
73. **READ, John ("Jack").** V.45963. A/AB. W-1. Home town -- Niagara Falls, Ont.. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944.
74. **RENNIE, F.** V.61476. A/AB. W-3. Served in Normandy, July 13 to August 22, 1944.
75. **ROSS, John Dayton ("Salty").** V.59089. AB. W-2. Born on April 10, 1925. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944. Following 1945 discharge, reentered Great Lakes Shipping where he had been a deckhand before enlisting in the RCNVR. Over the years he advanced from helmsman, through the three Mate levels, and right up to Captain. In 1989 he retired from the Great Lakes Pilotage Authority as a Marine Pilot and also holding the rank of Ship's Master. Attended May 1993 Calgary RCNA (Combined Operations) reunion. Died November 29, 1993 while vacationing in Florida: his wife predeceased him. They had four daughters and six grandchildren.

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76. **ROY, Joseph Felix ("Joey").** V.58383. AB. W-2. Home town -- Moncton, N.B.. Served in Normandy, July 13 to August 22, 1944.
77. **SAUVÉ, I.** V.4520. AB. W-2. Home town -- Montreal. Served in Normandy, July 13 to August 22, 1944.
78. **SHALES, Robert Irwin ("Bob").** V.17829. AB. O-66130. A/Lt. Assistant Beachmaster, W-2. Born in London, England, September 20, 1921. Enlisted in RCNVR in 1940, serving first as "buffer" aboard corvette HMCS Dawson and then as training officer, HMCS Queen at Regina, before his appointment to "W" in December 1943. Following convalescence after breaking both heels in June 1944, he served on the frigate HMCS Teme until, as a result of being "fished" and severely damaged off Falmouth in the English Channel on March 29, 1945, she had to be towed into port. Returning to Canada and civvy street six months later, he went on to earn a Commerce degree and establish his own real estate and mortgage brokerage company in Toronto, retiring in 1981. Married Claire A. Dibble, June 5, 1948; they have a daughter and a son, and live in Toronto.
79. **SKINNER, James ("Jimmy").** V.57957. AB. W-1. Home town -- Strathroy, Ont.. Due to illness in June 1944, drafted from "W" and replaced by H. Murray, AB.
80. **SMILEY, Delbert William ("Del").** V.37293. A/LS. W-1. Born in Didsbury, Alberta, January 6, 1923. Underwent ten months training on RN Combined Operations landing craft before joining "W" in November 1943. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944. Married back in Canada on November 24, 1944, a year prior to his discharge; they have four children and live in Nelson, B.C..
81. **SMITH, Haydon Dawson ("Smitty").** V.51476. A/AB. W-1. Born in Toronto, December 4, 1923; deceased July 13, 1992. Served in Normandy July 7 to August 22, 1944. Discharged from Navy on December 27, 1945 and the following day married CWAC Sheila Breen of St. John's, Newfoundland. Postwar worked in his father's Toronto retail shoe store, becoming owner in 1954 and retiring thirty-five years later at which time he listed his hobbies as "cottaging around Lindsay, Ont., reading, woodworking, and grandchildren." Three daughters and five "grands".
82. **SMITH, Irving A. ("Big Smith").** A.1702. A/PO. W-3. Home town -- Joggins Mines, N.S.. Served in Normandy, July 13 to August 22, 1944.

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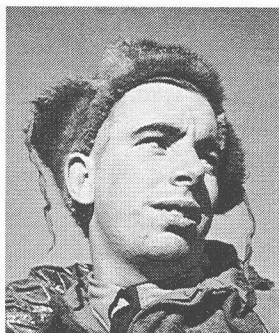
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83. **SMITH, Robert E. ("Bob").** V.41800. AB. W-1. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944.
84. **STEEL, Harold.** V.40651. AB. W-1. Home town -- Tamworth, Ont.. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944.
85. **STONE, George.** V.59719. A/AB. W-1. Home town -- Winnipeg. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944.
86. **SUTHERLAND, Donald Marshall ("Don").** O-71250. Lt. Beachmaster, W-1. Born in Toronto, June 22, 1916. Enlisted as OD in 1940, subsequently taking officer training in HMS King Alfred and serving for three years with the Royal Navy. Rescued by corvette HMCS Morden when S.S. Winnipeg, on which he was taking passage back to Canada for Foreign Service leave, was torpedoed and sunk in mid-Atlantic on October 22, 1942. Following a stint as "Jimmy" (i.e. First Lieutenant) at HMCS Niobe, he joined "W" Commando in November 1943. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944. Subsequently became Staff Officer (Operational Intelligence) at CNMO, attaining rank of Lt.Cr. (S.B.). Demobilized as of October 31, 1945. Three years after university studies and graduation (1945-51), he began a twenty-seven year career in book publishing (*viz.* Oxford University, Macmillan, and McGill-Queens) and helped compose the text for The Canadian Raleighites, edited by E.C. O'Neill and published in 1988 by Waterloo. Married Gwen Evans on June 27, 1952; they have four children and four "grands" and live in Toronto. As retirement interests, hobbies, and activities, he lists hiking & field studies with plant taxonomy; Scottish country-dancing; cross-country skiing; literature & writing; music, theatre; genealogy. Has been an active member in and the "W" Commando contact for the UK-based Royal Naval Commando Association.
87. **SUTHERLAND, J.** V.57957. A/AB. W-1. Served in Normandy, July 13 to August 22, 1944.
88. **TAPPER, H.** V.60681 (or V.60631). OD. W-3. Came from Newfoundland. Due to prolonged disability was replaced in March 1944 by L. Westerman, OD.
89. **THACKER, Archibald. ("Archie").** V.1434. PO. W-2. Home town -- Charlottetown. Four years in Navy with sea time in minesweepers and corvettes before draft to beach commandos. Served in Normandy, July 16 to August 22, 1944.

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90. **THERIEN, Armand.** V.31372. AB. W-1. Home town -- Montreal. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944.
91. **TREWIN, Douglas Frederick.** V.57668. A/AB. W-2. Born in Point de Bute, N.B., August 6, 1925. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944. Early in 1945 was drafted to HMCS Ontario (aboard which cruiser he ran into several former "W" members) and about a year afterwards received his discharge. Forty-one years later (viz. 1987) he retired from the Nova Scotia Power Corporation having attained the position of District Supervisor. Married with a family of five and now a widower, he lives in Parrsboro, N.S., where in 1992 he was installed as President of Branch 45 of the Royal Canadian Legion in which he has been a member since 1950.
92. **VAILLANCOURT, Jacques.** O-74790. Lt. Assistant Beachmaster, W-3. Home town -- Montreal. Spent six months in fairmiles and MTBs prior to joining "W" at the end of May, 1944. Served in Normandy, July 13 to August 22, 1944. Held appointments in corvettes HMCS Trillium and Humberstone prior to demobilization on October 11, 1945. In mid-1946 reenlisted in RCN and, having become a communications specialist and earned his "half-stripe" as a Lt.Cdr. six years later, he resigned from the Navy on April 16, 1952. Subsequently spent many years with Alcan. Married with two daughters, he and his wife live in Ottawa.
93. **VILNEFF, George.** V.53046. A/AB. W-1. Home town -- Cochrane and Cobalt, Ont.. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944.
94. **WALKER, James Gray.** O-75580. A/Lt. Being a S/Lt. on "RN loan" at the time, on November 7, 1943 he became Liaison officer for the "W" Commando ratings at HMS Armadillo. With the arrival in December of "W"'s full complement of officers, he transferrred to the Second Canadian LCI(L) Flotilla. Following a serious illness two months later, he returned to Canada in June and was subsequently sent to the Lady Eaton Convalescent Home in Toronto.
95. **WARREN, Denis A.** V.39693. A/LS. W-1. Home town -- Chatham, N.B.. Served in Normandy, July 13 to August 22, 1944.
96. **WATKINS, Ivor Eugene ("Junior").** V.44071. AB. W-1. Born in Montreal, May 23, 1924. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944. Retired in 1984 after thirty-nine years with Canadian Pacific Railways in signals and communications. Joined the Black Watch (R.H.C.) militia as a corporal in 1945 (D.598100) and twenty years later became Regimental

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Sergeant Major (nowadays called W.O.1). Commissioned as Lieutenant in 1968, he subsequently qualified as Captain and then Major, retiring with the former rank and transferring to the Supplementary Militia Reserve in 1973. Stepped down in 1992 after an eight-year term as President of the Black Watch Association. For many years has been president in charge of the Black Watch Museum in downtown Montreal. An accomplished wood carver, painter, and designer. Married Margaret Ruth Winterbottom of Montreal on June 5, 1948; they live in Pointe Claire, P.Q..

97. **WATT, Arthur Frederick ("Art").** V.56914. AB. W-2. Born in Craik, Sask., September 14, 1925. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944. Married at HMCS Cornwallis on December 27, 1944, his wife Opal was in the WRCNS. They have four sons and one daughter, sixteen grandchildren (as of 1992) ranging in age from 4 to 23, and they live in Craik. An extract from his Jan. 13, 1992 letter to the author states; "Actively operated grain farm since 1946. Cattle & hog operation, 1946-1972. Commercial aerial crop dusting, 1960-1980. Hold a current pilot license. Debt mediation for Federal Dep't of Agriculture, 1984-present."
98. **WESTERMAN, L.** V.58750. OD. W-3. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944.
99. **WHITE, Joseph B.** A.5019. AB. W-2. Home town -- Port Saunders, Newfoundland. Served in Normandy, July 7 to August 22, 1944.
100. **WINN, George.** V.8098. PO. W-1. Replaced by N. Knight, AB in June 1944.
101. **WOODALL, Earl Gerald ("Duke").** V.19246. AB. W-2. Born in Windsor, Ont., May 24, 1921. Pre-war private (A.450114) with Essex Scottish (RCIC). Transferred to RCNVR as able-seaman in 1941 and, after several weeks on North Atlantic convoy duty in HMCS Assiniboine and HMCS Medicine Hat respectively, was sent to Scotland at the beginning of 1942 for Combined Operations landing craft training. Following extensive service in connection with the Allied landings in North Africa and Italy, he joined "W" in June 1944 as a replacement for W.A. Burden, AB and served in Normandy from July 7 to August 22, 1944. Following foreign service leave, he spent eight months aboard HMCS Trail on the North Atlantic convoy routes before being discharge in October 1945. Reenlisted in Essex Scottish militia, 1946-51. Worked for many years in Windsor's main postoffice, retiring in 1986. Married Mildred Rebecca Chisholm (1922-74) on October 21, 1944; they had a son and a daughter and two grandchildren. For the last few years "Duke"

has been residing in Golden Gate Lodge, a Windsor rest home, where son Tom and his wife Bonnie visit him regularly.

102. **WRIGHT, W.** V.67555. AB. W-1. Came from Ontario. Replaced R. Crough, AB in mid-July 1944. Served in Normandy, July 13 to August 22, 1944.

103. **YULE, George.** LS. Came from Vancouver. Prior to joining "W" in October 1943, had served in corvettes on North Atlantic convoy duty.

103.



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